



Labour Party MARXISTS

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Our aims and principles

The widest, deepest and most powerful unity of the working class is needed to replace capitalism

1. The central aim of Labour Party Marxists is to transform the Labour Party into an instrument for working class advance and international socialism. Towards that end we will join with others and seek the closest unity of the left inside and outside the party.

2. Capitalism is synonymous with war, pollution, waste and production for its own sake. Attempts to rescue the system through Keynesian remedies are diversionary and doomed to fail. The democratic and social gains of the working class must be tenaciously defended, but capitalism must be superseded by socialism.

3. The only viable alternative is organising the working class into powerful and thoroughly democratic trade unions, co-ops, and other schools for socialism, and crucially into a political party which aims to replace the rule of the capitalist class with the rule of the working class.

4. The fight for trade union freedom, anti-fascism, women's rights, sexual freedom, republican democracy and opposition to all imperialist wars are inextricably linked to working class political independence and the fight for socialism.

5. Ideas of reclaiming the Labour Party and the return of the old clause four are totally misplaced. From the beginning the party has been dominated by the labour bureaucracy and the ideas of reformism. The party must be refounded on the basis of a genuinely socialist programme as opposed to social democratic gradualism or bureaucratic statism.

6. The aim of the party should not be a Labour government for its own sake. History shows that Labour governments committed to managing the capitalist system and loyal to the existing constitutional order create disillusionment in the working class.

7. Labour should only consider forming a government when it has the active support of a clear majority of the population and has a realistic prospect of implementing a full socialist programme. This cannot be achieved in Britain in isolation from Europe and the rest of the world.

8. Socialism is the rule of the working class over the global economy created by capitalism and as such is antithetical to all forms of British nationalism. Demands for a British road to socialism and a withdrawal from the European Union are therefore to be opposed.

9. Political principles and organisational forms go hand-in-hand. The Labour Party must become the umbrella organisation for all trade unions, socialist groups and pro-working class partisans. Hence all the undemocratic bans and proscriptions must be done away with.

10. The fight to democratise the Labour Party cannot be separated from the fight to democratise the trade unions. Trade union votes at Labour Party conferences should be cast not by general secretaries but proportionately according to the political balance in each delegation.

11. All trade unions should be encouraged to affiliate, all members of the trade unions encouraged to pay the political levy and join the Labour Party as individual members.

12. The party must be reorganised from top to bottom. Bring the Parliamentary Labour Party under democratic control. The position of Labour leader should be abolished along with the national policy forum. The NEC should be unambiguously responsible for drafting Labour Party manifestos.

13. The NEC should be elected and accountable to the annual conference, which must be the supreme body in the party. Instead of a tame rally there must be democratic debate and binding votes.

14. Our elected representatives must be recallable by the constituency or other body that selected them. That includes MPs, MEPs, MSPs, AMs, councillors, etc. Without exception elected representatives should take only the average wage of a skilled worker, the balance being donated to furthering the interests of the labour movement.

If you agree with the LPM's aims and principles or want to contact us, write to:

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Our demands most moderate are ... We only want the Earth!



Fight the bans and

Jim Moody examines the damage caused by the leadership's witch-hunts and calls for the Labour Party to be transformed into a united front of the whole working class

Established in February 1900, the Labour Party was initially a federal party composed only of affiliated trade unions and other organisations, such as socialist societies. One of the latter, the British Socialist Party (formerly the Social Democratic Federation), helped found the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1920. It was only in 1918 that the Labour Party permitted individual membership; before that time its activist base had been provided by affiliates, including the BSP and the Independent Labour Party.

Thanks in large part to its affiliate structure, the Labour Party continued for some time after World War I to have CPGB comrades as full individual members, though all CPGB requests to affiliate as an organisation were refused. In 1922, two CPGB members won parliamentary elections as Labour candidates: JT Walton Newbold was elected MP for Motherwell and Wishaw at a by-election in November; and Shapurji Saklatvala joined him by becoming MP for Battersea North at the general election later that same month.

Labour's national executive committee had been forced to drop its attempt to ban members of the CPGB becoming conference delegates, so that at the 1923 annual conference there were "36 party members as delegates, as against six at Edinburgh", the previous year.¹ This conference again considered, and rejected, CPGB affiliation on a card vote of 2,880,000 to 366,000.

In the December 1923 general election, Walton Newbold (in Motherwell) and William Gallacher (Dundee) stood as Communist Party candidates. However, fellow CPGBers Ellen Wilkinson (Ashton-under-Lyne), Shapurji Saklatvala (Battersea North), M Philips Price (Gloucester), William Paul (Manchester Rusholme) and Joe Vaughan (Bethnal Green SW) were official Labour Party candidates, while Alec Geddes (Greenock) and Aitkin Ferguson (Glasgow Kelvingrove) stood as unofficial Labour (there being no official Labour candidate in either constituency). Despite an increase in votes, none was elected.² A ban on CPGB members standing as Labour Party candidates followed.

However, although Labour Party support was forbidden for communist candidates, in the October 1924 general election, Battersea North Labour Party endorsed Saklatvala overwhelmingly; Joe Vaughan was unanimously endorsed by Bethnal Green SW CLP and William Paul similarly by the Rusholme CLP executive committee. Saklatvala was once more elected an MP.³

The 1924 annual conference decision against CPGB members retaining their LP membership was reaffirmed the following year. "At the same time, trade unions were asked not to nominate communists as delegates to Labour organisations."⁴ Despite these moves, at the end of 1926 1,544 of the CPGB's 7,900 members were still individual members of the Labour Party.

After the 1926 General Strike, rightwing Labour and trade union leaders wanted the movement to draw the lesson that the only way to make gains would be through increased cooperation with the capitalists - combined, of course, with the return of a Labour government. As an essential concomitant, the Labour leadership moved to impose a stifling central control and clamp down on the left, including the communists, who could be expected to fight their class collaboration.

The assault on CPGBers' individual membership began in London, where "434 communists out of a total London membership of 1,105 were active in their local Labour Parties or as delegates to them."⁵ In exposing the leading attacker, Herbert Morrison, secretary of London Labour Party, summarised his views

thus: "When the workers of London are prepared to lead, we of the London Labour Party will possibly consider whether it is desirable or convenient or respectable or constitutional to follow."⁶

Despite claiming that 'communists were splitting the movement', the Labour leadership did just that, by disaffiliating the existing Battersea LP for choosing Saklatvala and refusing to expel communists, and setting up an alternative. A similar prohibition was carried out against Bethnal Green LP, where communist ex-mayor Joe Vaughan was the right's bugbear. This pattern continued elsewhere, too, with unrecognised and official Labour Parties existing side by side for some years in several areas.

The Labour left fought back in the form of the National Left Wing Movement, which was set up in late 1925 not only to fight the bans but to hold together disaffiliated Labour Parties. The NLWM insisted it had no aim to supersede the Labour Party, but to bring it nearer to rank and file aspirations and in this it was greatly aided by the newly established *Sunday Worker*. Despite being set up on the initiative of and funded by the CPGB, the *Sunday Worker* was the voice of the NLWM and at its height achieved a circulation of 100,000. The NLWM's 1925 founding conference had nearly 100 divisional and borough Labour Parties sending delegates. Of course, as the right's campaign of closures and expulsions remorselessly proceeded, the NLWM found itself weakened in terms of official Labour Party structures. Hence at the NLWM's second annual conference in 1927, there were delegates from only 54 local Labour Parties and other Labour groups (representing a total of 150,000 individual party members). Militant union leaders, such as miners' leader AJ Cook, supported the conference.

As the decade advanced, CPGB relations with the Labour Party were to change markedly, as Stalinism took hold in the Soviet Union. Communist parties around the world slavishly followed the Soviet-run Comintern's turn against social democratic parties in 1928, loyally parroting the 'social-fascist' label of the 'third period'. In Britain, the CPGB was no different: theoreticians such as Rajani Palme Dutt led its relatively small membership into self-imposed exile outside the Labour Party.

In countries like Britain, where there was a small Communist Party, the Comintern line inevitably led to isolation from the rest of the politically organised working class. As part of this self-inflicted madness in 1929 the *Sunday Worker* was closed and the NLWM wound up. Ralph Miliband notes: "It was only in 1929 that the Communist Party, on instructions from the Comintern, came under the control of the erstwhile minority and adopted the new line of total opposition to all non-communists in the labour movement. From then until 1933, the CP held to a 'revolutionary' policy, which isolated it ever more strictly from the labour movement and brought it to the nadir of its influence."⁷

Widening bans

In 1930, 10 years after the foundation of the CPGB and 12 years after the Labour Party introduced individual membership, the Labour Party produced its first 'proscribed list', although it was not issued under a section of the constitution.

By this means, members of proscribed organisations became ineligible for individual membership of the party and local Labour branches were prohibited from affiliating to proscribed organisations; these included the influential National Unemployed Workers' Movement and the National Minority Movement. At the time when the restrictions were introduced, it became a condition of Labour

Party membership that members already active in proscribed organisations had to leave them forthwith. Nevertheless, it took a further three years' intense activity by the Labour Party right before it was able to change the constitution to prohibit individual members of the CPGB from joining as and remaining members of the Labour Party.

Of course, this was just when real fascism came to power in Germany and Comintern's line changed again. But, with this turn, the CPGB's new cross-class popular frontism was hardly destined to win influence for revolutionary politics in the Labour Party in any case. A formal proscribed list was to remain in place in the Labour Party for the next four decades.

Not only was the CPGB proscribed, but a whole raft of organisations fell foul of the Labour leadership's attack on anything smacking of the revolutionary or even radical left. Those affected included organisations of the unemployed, international solidarity bodies and trade union defence committees. The League Against Imperialism (1927-36) was also proscribed. The LAI's secretary was Reginald Bridgeman, a former British diplomat in Iran, who had contested Uxbridge for Labour in the 1929 general election. But he was expelled from the party because of his membership of the LAI. More organisations continued to be added to the proscribed list throughout the 1930s.

The Independent Labour Party formally joined with the CPGB and the NUWM on September 29 1931 to fight unemployment. After years of battling the right in the Labour Party from within, a special conference of the ILP in 1932 disaffiliated from the Labour Party; that section of its members which stayed in the LP helped found the Socialist League. This was not the first time the SL had campaigned with the CPGB, of course. "From 1931, the CP-led National Unemployed Workers' Movement captured the field as the leading champion of the unemployed, and large number of Labour Party SL members were caught up in demonstrations led by CP members (by November 1932, of 5,400 Communist Party members, 60% were unemployed)."⁸

A bare few months after Hitler's Nazis had taken over in Germany, anti-communist prohibition and the threat of proscription were still the paramount issues for Labour's right wing: "Labour leaders warned SL members against any form of collaboration with CP members in anti-fascist organisations under CP control or influence."⁹

Led by Stafford Cripps, the Socialist League was a continual thorn in the side of the right. In 1936 Cripps and the SL were pulled in behind the Unity Campaign by the ILP and the CPGB. The aim was to oppose the growing forces of the far right and fascism. Spain became their great cause. In January 1937 Labour's national executive disaffiliated the SL, on the basis of the organisation's alleged 'disloyalty' to the Labour Party. Two months later, the NEC delivered the body blow and declared membership of the SL incompatible with that of Labour.

The majority of the SL decided to disband the organisation and remain as individual LP members. "It was on the advice of the Communist Party that the SL was 'invited' to disband; it was on CP advice that joint meetings between Labour Unity supporters, the ILP and the CP were terminated. There were discussions in the Unity Campaign committee as to SL tactics, and CP leaders urged the SL to prove the sincerity of its desire for unity 'within the framework of the Labour Party' by accepting the ultimatum of the NEC and voluntarily dissolve itself."¹⁰

Clearly scenting blood, Labour's NEC went further at its June 1937 meeting in witch-

hunting everyone associated with the Unity Campaign. "Women's sections and constituency parties were forbidden even to discuss 'unity'; divisional party officers were told to ensure the UC's defeat; party membership was refused to applicants whose husbands were communists ..."¹¹ Although Cripps complied with the NEC's ruling and subsequently organised the members-only Labour's National Unity Committee, this too was added to the list of 'crimes' that eventually led to his expulsion at the May-June annual conference in 1939.

In 1942, the Labour Research Department (which had originally been founded in 1912 as the Fabian Research Department, an offshoot of the Fabian Society) was accused of being controlled by the CPGB; it too was proscribed and remained so until 1971, though many branches of Labour-affiliated trade unions in struggle continued to find enormous value in its publication of companies' accounts and directorships in the intervening decades. While some LRD staff members were CPGB members, it was financed and controlled by its 592 affiliated bodies, only 11 of which could be described as largely communist-influenced organisations.

Cold war hysteria

Following the end of World War II, anti-communism took on hysterical proportions. Propagandists from Voice of America to the BBC denounced the largely imaginary Soviet threat. This was the age of Winston Churchill's 'iron curtain' Fulton speech and Joe McCarthy's House Committee on Un-American Activities. The cold war had begun.

In that atmosphere the Labour Party right was able to step up its moves against the left under the guise of acting against 'red sympathisers'. The new wave of proscriptions continued well into the 1960s.

In 1951, for example, annual conference endorsed a ban on the Socialist Fellowship, which had been founded in 1949 on a programme that "included increased public ownership, workers' control of industry, heavier taxation of the wealthy and a more equal distribution of income, reduced compensation to the former shareholders of the nationalised industries, greater efficiency in industry and improved social services".¹² This was surely a pretty clear left Labourite platform. The World Federation of Scientific Workers (1946-96) was proscribed in 1953, along with another 17 groups newly investigated that year by the national agent's department, which had overall responsibility for compiling the proscription list. In 1954 the publication *Socialist Outlook* was proscribed and as a result folded the same year.

In 1958, John Lawrence, who had been its editor, and several dozen other leading members of the St Pancras Labour Party, including councillors and aldermen, were expelled for activity that party bureaucrats described (without evidence) as "inimical to the best interests of the Labour Party". One of the group's crimes was to have flown the red flag over the town hall in place of the union jack on May Day in 1958, prompting Mosleyite fascist and Tory physical attacks. In a protest letter to the NEC, Lawrence proudly remarked that he had been the "leader of a borough council which has earned itself a reputation for defying the Tory government and for refusing to meekly acquiesce in Tory policy".¹³

As the 1950s came to an end, the number of proscribed organisations continued to grow. In 1959 the Socialist Labour League, of which Gerry Healy was a leading member and whose comrades were also Labour Party members, was proscribed. SLL influence over the Labour Party's youth organisation, the Young Socialists, led to the Labour right closing YS in

proscriptions

1964.¹⁴ In the 1960s, proscribed organisations included the British-Soviet Friendship Society, the World Peace Council and the World Federation of Trade Unions. In 1965, Labour's NEC expelled 18 members of Paddington South CLP following allegations of a Trotskyist takeover.

When Ron Hayward replaced Harry Nicholas as Labour general secretary in 1972, he called into question the effectiveness of the proscribed list. In a circular to party members in July 1973, Hayward wrote: "The national executive committee conducted a complete review of the list of proscribed organisations, during which it became apparent that the list was unsatisfactory. While some political organisations had been formally placed on this list, others which advocated policies of a like nature were not included.

"Difficulties have been experienced in keeping a current record of the many political organisations that are established, many of which are of short life, change their names or merge with other organisations. Moreover, the existence of the list had created an impression that if an organisation were not listed it was in order for affiliated and party organisations to associate with it."¹⁵

Hayward's careful use of words in the transmission of the NEC's decision cannot disguise the underlying belief in the continuing entitlement of the party right wing to rule the roost by administrative means. The right's weapon of prohibition against the revolutionary left organising in party groupings remained, but reforged into something other than a simple list of proscribed organisations. It meant, too, that this weapon was no longer to be wielded by the party's organisations from branch level up, but only by the central bureaucracy. Despite the feeling then that the right was beleaguered on the NEC, it still had a majority, but one which had to be more subtle in swinging the axe against elements of the left.

As one academic study shortly after these events commented, "The NEC has not diminished its powers. The change is one of policy, not a constitutional amendment, and the proscribed list could therefore be reintroduced by the NEC at any time without notice. In the meantime it can act against any organisation of which it disapproves on the basis of the existing rules on ineligibility that remain in force."¹⁶ It was in fact on the basis of ineligibility that the next battles commenced.

Expulsion of Militant

At the end of 1975 the party's national agent, Reg Underhill, drew up a report on Trotskyist groups in the Labour Party. However, Underhill's established reputation as a witch-hunter notwithstanding, the balance of forces in the party was not sufficiently tilted to the right to enable it to act quite so crudely against the left as before.

In recalling these events later, the current general secretary of the Socialist Party in

England and Wales, Peter Taaffe, who was then editor of *Militant*, noted: "At the NEC organisation sub-committee Underhill called for action to be taken. He was answered by left MPs Ian Mikardo and Eric Heffer. Mikardo declared that there were 'good articles in their paper - good material in *Militant*. Reg's evidence says that they are pretty small in numbers. With 30 full-time organisers to only have 800 members is not very good.' Eric Heffer declared: 'My party [Walton] in the past was run by the Deane group [who pioneered Marxist work in Liverpool before the establishment of *Militant*], but that was nothing to get upset about ... What is wrong with selling *Tribune* or *Militant* in preference to *Labour Weekly*? ... don't react to pressure from outside for a witch-hunt ... don't push youngsters into a corner.' Underhill interjected, saying that 'all the denials under the sun were made by the Socialist Labour League when they controlled the Young Socialists'. Eric Heffer angrily hit back: 'They were a bunch of gangsters. Militant are totally different.' The sub-committee decided not to proceed with Underhill's enquiries."¹⁷

While he was leader (1976-80), James Callaghan continued the rightwing imperative to stifle dissent in the party by calling on both the *Tribune* and *Manifesto* groups to disband. Quite correctly, they ignored him.

However, the campaign against *Militant* in the Labour Party gathered apace in 1981 under the leadership of Michael Foot, one of the most prominent figures on the Labour left. At the end of that year the NEC set up an inquiry under Hayward and national agent David Hughes into *Militant*'s activities within the party. It reported in June 1982, in part proposing a register of non-affiliated groups that would be allowed to operate within the Labour Party. This was a new variation on the old proscribed list theme.

The Hayward-Hughes inquiry's definitive finding on *Militant* was that it was a "well-organised caucus centrally controlled ... with its own programme and policy or separate and distinctive propaganda". This latter phrase is a direct reference to a prohibition in clause two, section five of the Labour Party constitution; the inquiry found *Militant* in breach of this rule. To put it another way, *Militant* "would not be eligible to be included in the proposed register", which it had applied to join. In fact, the register was never actually drawn up, leading to the inevitable conclusion that it was an undemocratic and bogus device to expel *Militant* and its members from Labour ranks with a gloss of legitimacy.

"Both Foot and Mortimer¹⁸, then, saw themselves engaged in a delicate balancing act: on the one hand, to curb *Militant*'s influence, whilst, on the other, devising a strategy which would both mobilise a solid vote at conference and avoid large-scale expulsions. Hence the register, whose application, it was anticipated, would lead to the removal of *Militant*'s 'inner organising group' (Mortimer's phrase) and extend no further."¹⁹ Initially, then, only a handful of *Militant* members were expelled: the editorial board of *Militant* - the only clear and avowed members of the *Militant* Tendency who could be identified with certainty. This restriction was partly a result of the unsuccessful legal action taken by *Militant* members, which had this side-effect, on party lawyers' advice, forcing Mortimer to adhere more closely to party rules, rather than acting *ultra vires* and against 'natural justice'. But eventually the attack widened.

Mortimer and the party leadership were in something of a dilemma and, "short of abandoning the fight, the NEC had no option but to proscribe *Militant*. This it did, by 18 votes to nine, in December 1982. The tendency's members were now ineligible to remain within the Labour Party. Given that *Militant* denied having any members (only 'supporters'), the next step was to devise a workable definition of *Militant* membership. To comply with legal requirements, the definition finally approved by the NEC in January was wide-ranging. It

stated that, in seeking to establish membership of *Militant*, the executive 'shall have regard, in particular, to their involvement in financial support for and/or the organisation of and/or the activities of the *Militant* Tendency."²⁰

Labour's right now had to keep its powder dry and gather evidence against the mass of *Militant* supporters who were Labour Party members sufficient, if need be, to satisfy the bourgeois courts and thus stall any legal challenge to expulsions. And anyway the mood of non-*Militant* rank-and-file members in the 1980s was not to accept demurely the diktats of the leadership, but rather to question its authority. Mass expulsions of *Militant* members would likely have produced widespread membership refusal to accept NEC decisions, leading to a breakdown in the leadership's ability to manage the party.

In September 1982 annual conference endorsed the Hayward-Hughes report, declaring that the *Militant* organisation was ineligible to affiliate to the party and that its members were thus banned from operating in any way within it. Many on the Labour left were not happy with this result, especially as it dawned on them that the weapon it handed to the right could be wielded in a similarly unprincipled way against members of any left grouping within the party that was not already an affiliate. Although the soft-left *Tribune* group supported (albeit by a narrow margin) Foot's and the right's attack on *Militant*, others declared strongly against it. The Labour Coordinating Committee and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, among others, denounced it as unacceptable and an attack on party members' democratic rights. But it was in the end approved by the NEC by 16 votes to 10. In an editorial, *New Socialist* declared strongly against witch-hunts in the Labour Party, stating that, "The Labour Party always has been a broad collection that includes Marxists amongst its ranks."²¹ There was, however, clearly insufficient opposition to effect a reversal, which gave the right added incentive to press on.

Controversially, as a last desperate stand, in December 1982 *Militant* tried for a court injunction to restrain the NEC, but was unsuccessful. Comrade Taaffe subsequently claimed: "*Militant* did not believe that this was the main way to fight the witch-hunt. At best it was an auxiliary which could temporarily stay the hand of the right wing and allow time to build up support amongst the ranks to prevent a purge, or at least limit its scope."²²

At the end of February 1983, the NEC had expelled the five members of the *Militant* editorial board: Taaffe, Ted Grant, Keith Dickenson, Lynn Walsh and Clare Doyle. When all five appealed this decision to the September 1983 annual conference, they lost largely thanks to the trade unions. While two thirds of constituency delegates voted against expulsions, the block votes wielded by union general secretaries assured rejection of their appeals; card voting was 5,160,000 for expulsion to 1,616,000 against for four of the appellants, though Ted Grant got 175,000 votes extra in his favour.

Neil Kinnock's address to the 1985 annual conference marked the beginning of the second wave of the attack on *Militant*. The committee of enquiry into Liverpool council, a *Militant* bastion, produced a damning majority report.²³ The Liverpool party was suspended and its *Militant* members expelled; more expulsions around the country followed. A realignment of the left in the party meant that much of the opposition evident three years earlier was absent and conference voted by 6,146,000 to 325,000 to expel *Militant*'s members.

End the bans

This is the catch-all prohibition against organisations that the right does not like in clause two, (section 5a) of the Labour Party constitution: "Political organisations not affiliated or associated under a national agreement with the party, having their own programme, principles and policy for distinctive and separate

propaganda, or possessing branches in the constituencies, or engaged in the promotion of parliamentary or local government candidates, or having allegiance to any political organisation situated abroad, shall be ineligible for affiliation to the party."

Obviously this is very much a moveable feast and open to interpretation, like much bourgeois law - with the NEC judging when it might be politic to utilise it.

Clearly there is no problem with groupings on the Blairite right - which is why there are no moves, for example, to ban Progress, even though it is not an affiliate, but has its own principles and carries out distinctive and separate propaganda. On its website, the group proclaims: "Progress is the New Labour pressure group which aims to promote a radical and progressive politics for the 21st century. Founded in 1996, we are an independent organisation of Labour Party members and trade unionists. Through our national and regional events and regular publications, we seek to promote open debate and discussion of progressive ideas and policies."²⁴

It all comes down to how "distinctive and separate" an organisation's programme and propaganda is considered.

In a statement submitted to the 1986 annual conference, the NEC was forced to acknowledge that now, "if challenged, our basic rules and long-standing procedures may well be deemed by the courts to be incompatible with natural justice in certain respects."²⁵ It was fear of the bourgeois courts that made the right more circumspect than it might otherwise have been over the *Militant* affair.

Notes

1. JT Murphy, 'The Labour Party conference' *The Communist Review* August 1923, Vol 4, No4: www.marxists.org/archive/murphy-jt/1923/08/labour_conf.htm.
2. J Klugmann *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain Vol 1: Formation and early years, 1919-1924* London 1968.
3. *Ibid*.
4. N Branson *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1927-1941* London 1985, p5.
5. *Ibid* p5.
6. *Ibid* p6, quoting *Workers' Life* December 2 1927.
7. R Miliband *Parliamentary socialism* London 1960, p153.
8. M Bor *The Socialist League in the 1930s* London 2005, p154.
9. *Ibid* p272, summarising rightist Ernie Bevin in TUC report September 1933, appendix C, p434.
10. *Ibid* p374.
11. *Ibid* p380.
12. D Rubinstein, 'Socialism and the Labour Party: the Labour left and domestic policy, 1945-50' in *What Next?* 1978: www.whatnextjournal.co.uk/Pages/history/Lableft.html.
13. Quoted by Bob Pitt in his *Red flag over St Pancras*: www.marxists.org/history/etol/revhist/otherdox/whatnext/spancras.html.
14. The Socialist Labour League became the Workers Revolutionary Party in 1973.
15. R Hayward, 'Discontinuation of the proscribed list' (circular to secretaries of affiliates and Labour Party organisations, July 1973).
16. P McCormick, 'The Labour Party: three unnoticed changes' *British Journal of Political Science* Vol 10, No3, July 1980.
17. P Taaffe *The rise of Militant: Militant's 30 years* London 1995, chapter 12. Taaffe's internal quotes are taken from The notes of Nick Bradley. Nick Bradley was the Labour Party Young Socialists' delegate on the NEC and *Militant* was at the time heavily involved in the LPYS.
18. Jim Mortimer, Labour general secretary 1982-85, had himself been forced to leave the party for a period in the early 1950s, when he was vice-chair of the proscribed Anglo-Chinese Friendship Society.
19. E Shaw, 'The Labour Party and the Militant Tendency' *Parliamentary Affairs* (1989) 42(2), p183.
20. *Ibid* p185.
21. *New Socialist* September-October 1982.
22. Quoted by Bob Pitt in *Red flag over St Pancras*: www.marxists.org/history/etol/revhist/otherdox/whatnext/spancras.html.
23. Labour Party NEC Investigation into Liverpool District Party 1986.
24. www.progressionline.org.uk/about/who.asp.
25. Labour Party rules 2010, quoted on p194: www.leftfutures.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Labour-Party-Rule-Book-2010.pdf.

Motion to the LRC annual conference

The Labour Representation Committee does not aim for a Labour government for its own sake. Bad Labour governments do not lead to good Labour governments. They lead to Tory governments.

History shows that Labour governments committed to managing the capitalist system and loyal to the existing constitutional order create disillusionment in the working class.

The aim must be that the Labour Party should only consider forming a government when it has the active support of a clear majority of the population and has a realistic prospect of implementing a full socialist programme.

Refound Labour as a real party of labour

Refounding the Labour Party is long overdue. There have been too many wasted years. It is a crying shame then that Peter Hain's consultation paper is so timid, so uninspiring. No damning critique of capitalism, no bold socialist vision, no proposals to radically democratise the party. Instead we are offered managerial, tokenistic, superficial tinkering.

The continued existence of capitalism goes unquestioned. The deepest, most protracted economic crisis since the 1930s gets a mention, but no commensurate conclusions follow.

Our party, our society, our species face huge challenges. No-one objects to using the internet, tweeting, community campaigns or organising an annual "summer weekend" festival. Yet, given the ongoing massive cuts programme of the Con-Dem government, the sovereign debt crisis in Europe, the terrible wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the drift into new 'humanitarian' interventions, the abject failure to counter the danger of ecological collapse, the urgent necessity for a socialist transition and a complete transformation of all existing conditions, more, much more, is needed.

There are those amongst us, of course, who fondly look back to what they imagine to be a golden age. The old clause four (part four) of our constitution committed us: "To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service."

Mistakenly, this is interpreted as a sincere commitment to socialism. But when it was first adopted, in February 1918 - during the slaughter of inter-imperialist war - the idea of Sidney Webb and the Fabians was to divert the considerable sympathy that existed for the Russian Revolution into safe, constitutional, channels.

Needless to say, clause four was mainly for show. However, even if it had been taken seriously and put into practice, Fabian socialism is antithetical to working class self-liberation. Industry, banking, transport, etc, would be bureaucratically nationalised. The mass of the population, however, remain exploited wage-slaves. Capitalism without capitalists.

Nevertheless, the old clause four resulted from mass pressure. Because of World War I, because of the Russian Revolution, capitalism was widely discredited, viewed as inherently irrational, warlike, prone to constantly recurring crises. Socialism was seen as the answer. What was true of 1918 is increasingly the case in the 2010s.

There is a widespread rejection of capitalism; even in the United States an April 2009 Rasmussen poll showed only 53 percent of American adults rating capitalism "better than socialism" (www.rasmussenreports.com).

Showing how badly out of touch he is with the growing anti-capitalist mood, Peter Hain actually celebrates what he calls the "reforming" of clause four in 1994. A "hugely important political symbol", he emphatically declares. Indeed it was.

Tony Blair and New Labour were trying to assure the establishment, the City, the Murdoch empire, the global plutocracy that capitalism would be safe in their hands. That a New Labour government would not even pay lip service to what was in fact a British nationalist version of state capitalism.

Whatever differences Peter Hain has with New Labour, he is impeccably New Labour on this score at least ... meanwhile Ed Miliband flirts with Blue Labour.

Calls for a return of the old clause four are

This is the LPM response to the 'Refounding Labour to win' project fronted by Peter Hain



Peter Hain... cynical

understandable, but totally misplaced. We need to go forwards, not look backwards. Labour needs to organise on the basis of an explicitly socialist, as opposed to a social democratic, neoliberal or Blue Labour programme. Only then can we fulfil our responsibilities.

That is why Labour Party Marxists advocate extreme democracy in society and throughout the labour movement, working class rule and international socialism.

Historically - in terms of membership, finances and electoral base - our party has largely relied on the working class. This has been our greatest strength; and here is the source of our hope and confidence in the future. Because of its constantly renewed social position the working class tends towards collectivist, socialistic solutions.

Despite Blairism, New Labour and the public sacrifice of the old clause four, we remain a distinctly class party. The historic relationship with the trade unions survives, there are still 2.7 million affiliated members and the working class "core vote" stood up well in the last general election.

Peter Hain is right, of course, when he points to a long-term decline of our mass base. Between 1997 and 2010 we lost five million votes.

However, there must be more to this than three terms in government, changing patterns of work and the "growth of sports and other leisure interests." Maintaining Tory anti-trade union laws, widening inequality, Iraq and Gordon Brown's fawning before the market, big business and the banks caused dismay and demoralisation. Our voters did not in general desert to other parties. They simply stopped voting.

We are asked how "better working class representation" can be achieved. Refounding Labour registers an aspiration to "re-create a much more organic link between the party and the trade union movement". Underlined by Ed Miliband's introductory statement that he does "not want to break the party up, but build it up".

Unlike New Labour, he harbours no ambition to break the link with the trade unions. Nowadays, that would certainly result in a financial catastrophe - debt crippled our election campaign in 2010 and donations from the super-rich have almost entirely dried up. Yet, whatever the motivation, a commitment to retain the trade union link is to be welcomed.

So how to re-engage our traditional base, how to reinvigorate the relationship with the trade unions? We say the Labour Party can and must be refounded as a real party of labour. By that we mean rebuilding and thoroughly democratising the Labour Party. We

want to make Labour into a common home for all workers and working class organisations - the goal of the founders of the party in 1900.

As a party we should commit ourselves to energetically campaign to revive the trade union movement. The fall from 12 million trade union members in the late 1970s to some seven million today can be reversed. Party members should take the lead in recruiting masses of new trade unionists and restoring the strength of the unions in the workplace and in society at large. Every level of the party needs to be involved. That includes our councillors and MPs.

Strikes must be unashamedly supported. There ought to be a binding commitment to back workers in their struggle to protect jobs, pensions and conditions. Inevitably the anti-trade union laws will have to be defied.

In parallel all trade unions ought to be encouraged to affiliate to the Labour Party, all members of the trade unions encouraged to pay the political levy to the Labour Party and join as individual members.

Unions that have either been expelled or have disaffiliated need to be welcomed back: eg, the RMT and FBU. But there are unions which have never had an organised relationship with the Labour Party: eg, PCS and NUT. Indeed of the 58 unions affiliated to the TUC only 15 are affiliated to Labour. Winning new trade union affiliates would help transform our present situation.

While Labour Party Marxists support the idea of making membership affordable for those who are students, unemployed or are on low pay, we oppose the suggestion of blurring the distinction between those who are members - with the right to elect, be elected and decide policy, etc - and those who are supporters. Membership of the Labour Party should be something to value, to be proud of.

Naturally, the fight to refund and rebuild the Labour Party cannot be separated from the fight to democratise the trade unions. All trade union officials ought to be subject to regular election and be recallable. No official should receive pay higher than the average of the membership. Moreover, rules which restrict the ability of the rank and file to organise and criticise must be swept away. They bring discredit to our movement.

Trade union votes at Labour Party conferences should be cast not by general secretaries, but proportionately, according to the political balance in each delegation. Conference cannot be dominated by four or five men in suits.

The Labour Party should be reorganised from top to bottom. All socialist and com-

munist groups, leftwing think tanks and progressive campaigns ought to be allowed to affiliate. Towards that end the undemocratic bans and proscriptions must be rescinded. Clause two (five) must be reformulated. A whole raft of new affiliated socialist and other such organisations would not bring in hundreds of thousands of new recruits, it would though bring in many highly valuable men and women of talent and dedication. The culture of our party can that way be greatly enhanced.

The Parliamentary Labour Party has to be brought into line. We must end the situation where Labour members vote for one thing and the PLP does another. Musings about minimal parliamentary attendance and codes of conduct are a dangerous diversion. What is needed is not further measures of bureaucratic control from above, but democratic control from below.

Our ward and constituency parties will continue to wither and die if they remain under the thumb of regional organisers and are expected to act as mere transmission belts for Victoria Street. Local autonomy enlivens, educates and lays the basis for growth and national influence. All officials in the Labour Party must be subject to regular election and re-election.

Labour Party Marxists want the present post of Labour leader abolished. While our party has to fulfil the statutory requirements laid down in the thoroughly undemocratic Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act, the Führerprinzip can be left to others. The leader of the Labour Party should be a nominal position. Instead of a Bonaparte with the power to appoint shadow ministers, the National Executive Committee should be responsible for electing chairs of the PLP, shadow ministers, etc.

Members are deeply alienated. The Joint Policy Committee, the National Policy Forum and the whole Partnership into Power rigmarole have demonstrably failed. Instead of reforming them they should simply be abolished. The NEC must be unambiguously responsible for drafting Labour Party manifestoes. And, of course, the NEC needs to be fully accountable to annual conference.

Annual conference must be the supreme body of the Labour Party. We need democratic debate and binding votes. Not a happy-clappy rally designed for TV producers. Make officials and shadow ministers report as humble servants. No more preening media stars, no more control-freakery, no more business lobbyists, promotions and exhibits. An authoritative, honest, no-holds barred conference would certainly guarantee an immediate increase in CLPs sending delegates to conference: numbers fell from 527 in 2002 to 444 in 2009 and only 412 in 2010 - under two thirds the total entitled to attend.

As with the trade unions, our elected representatives must be recallable by the constituency or other body that selected them. That includes Labour MPs, MEPs, MSPs, AMs, councillors, etc.

Likewise, without exception, our elected representatives should take only the average wage of a skilled worker. When it comes to existing salaries, the balance should be given to the party. On current figures, that means around £40,000 from each MP (at present they are only obliged to pay the £82 parliamentarians' subscription rate). That would give a substantial fillip to our depleted finances.

It should be a basic principle that our representatives live like workers, not pampered middle class careerists. If that was done, no longer would people say, 'All politicians are the same' or that they are 'all in it for personal gain'.

Our task is refounding the Labour Party as a real party of labour: a workers' party.