



Labour Party MARXISTS

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Reject the Collins review

Transforming the Labour Party remains a strategic necessity. Stan Keable, secretary of Labour Party Marxists, makes the case for genuine democracy

Talk about the demise of the Labour Party's trade union link is greatly exaggerated. Those on the left who stand aloof from the party because its leadership is rightwing, or campaign for trade unions to disaffiliate, are running away from the fight for socialist politics within Labour and merely leaving the right in control. The deficiencies in the party are as old as the party itself.

Lord Sainsbury's Blairite protégés promoted by the Progress organisation will be disappointed that their political careers will continue to be tainted by association with the collective decision-making so essential to working class democracy. Stephen Bush, a "contributing editor to Progress", describes the link as "a relationship that should never have started in the first place" and writes of "the party founders' historic error in building a relationship with trade unions and not trade unionists".¹

Peter Taaffe's Socialist Party in England and Wales - the ex-Militant Tendency majority who ran away from the fight to win the Labour Party to socialism - is unable to sustain its self-serving line that Labour has already been transformed into a purely bourgeois party, just because they are out of it. Labour's death as any kind of workers' party is now postponed for a further five years: "... if implemented, the Collins review will mean the destruction of the last remnants of the trade unions' organised presence within the Labour Party ... this will conclude the already advanced transformation of Labour into one more party of big business."² So the struggle in the party is not over? A pity you have given up the ghost, comrades.

After implementation of the Collins proposals, the unions will retain their 12 NEC seats and their 50% share of conference votes. Labour will remain a "bourgeois workers' party" (Lenin's famous description) - a product of the workers' movement, but dominated by parliamentary leaders with pro-capitalist politics. Its bourgeois pole is dominant and its working class pole is subordinate, but that is nothing new. The trade union bureaucrats can sometimes prevent changes that do not suit them, but it is the Parliamentary Labour Party which rules, and the 'leader' who rules the PLP - and that is nothing new either. The PLP can safely ignore conference decisions - but that anti-democratic Labour 'principle' was formally endorsed as long ago as the 1907 party conference.

The proposed 'democratisation' of the party will leave the MPs, not the party, choosing candidates for leader and deputy leader, before the rest of us get to vote for a candidate not of our choice - again that is nothing new. The extensive patronage powers of the party leader to give away jobs is not mentioned by Collins, so the *Führerprinzip* will continue its corrupting influence: MPs' loyalty

goes to the leader, not the party - once more nothing new.

In short, there was no golden age of 'real Labour'. Labourism was hobbled by capitalist politics from the beginning - Liberal Party politics, to be precise - along with a trade union movement dominated by a self-serving, privileged bureaucracy.³ However, this unfortunate situation is not inevitable.

The fight to democratise and rebuild our unions and our party, and transform them into effective instruments of working class struggle, is inseparable from the fight to win the active support of the working class majority for the socialist political programme. Without this, capitalism cannot be superseded positively. Those who claim that the party cannot possibly be transformed might just as well argue that those other mass organisations produced by our class, the trade unions, cannot be transformed, or that the working class cannot be won for socialism.

The party has been saddled with rightwing, pro-capitalist leaders, whether trade union bureaucrats or professional, careerist politicians, since the foundation of the original Labour Representation Committee in 1900. But there is no good reason why this must be so. It is certainly not because the right wing has such a good political programme for our class. Every Labour government to date has demoralised and weakened the workers' movement and paved the way for the return of a Tory administration.

It is not that the Labour right deserves to win, but the Labour left deserves to lose - so long as it prioritises short-term vote-winning and the return of a Labour government above the long-term struggle to win active majority support for working class socialism. Yes, we need to elect socialist MPs, to act as tribunes of the people, as the voice of those in struggle. But we need an Ed Miliband government attempting to establish a "responsible capitalism" like a hole in the head.

If and when the left becomes strong in the party, the capitalist media can be relied upon to pull out all the stops to make Labour 'unelectable', and the careerists of the Labour right can be expected to jump ship, as they did in the 1980s. Good riddance! Better still, we should drive out the pro-capitalist politicians as class enemies within our movement, starting with those who collaborate with the present Tory-led coalition government.

Socialist strategy towards Labour should not be entryism, seeking to split the left away at an opportune moment. That would leave the party in the hands of the right. No, our aim must be to win the party for working class liberation, for socialist politics, for Marxism, and kick out the pro-capitalist right. Rebuilding and re-



Link: still unbroken

educating our movement and our class from its present politically weak condition must be done in opposition to a capitalist government of any stripe, not in servile loyalty to 'our' capitalist government.

Rubber stamp

Lord Ray Collins's final report, endorsed by Labour's national executive committee on February 4, will be rubber-stamped by the March 1 two-hour special 'conference' with the backing of delegates representing the three largest affiliated unions: Unite, GMB and Unison.⁴ No amendments will be allowed. Only one vote will be taken: 'yes' or 'no'.

Months of behind-the-scenes negotiations between top trade union bureaucrats, on one side, and Ed Miliband and his apparatchiks and would-be capitalist ministers, on the other, reportedly described by an unnamed shadow cabinet member as a "rollercoaster", have predictably produced a rotten compromise which reflects the present balance of forces.⁵ The outcome leaves the trade union link intact, but weakened, and is correctly characterised by Socialist Appeal - the ex-Militant Tendency minority who opted to stay in the party - as a mere "re-jigging of internal party procedures".⁶

Nevertheless, the Collins proposals, Ed Miliband claims, are "the biggest changes to who can become involved in the Labour Party since probably its formation".⁷ So what are these changes?

Firstly, the three-part electoral

college for leader and deputy leader elections - one third each for CLPs, affiliates and PLP - is abolished, so that only individuals can vote, and all votes count equally, whether cast by an MP, a party member, an affiliated supporter or a registered supporter (see below). No longer will some individuals have multiple votes - one as a party member, another as a trade union levy-payer, a third as a member of an affiliated socialist society, for example. But this desperate attempt to appease the rightwing press and appear democratic comes with an old formula. The PLP gets to choose the candidates. So the 'one member, one vote' election in the party is preceded by MPs voting to select a short list of candidates.

In the few days before the February 4 NEC meeting, the threshold percentage of MPs required to get nominated was knocked down by the trade union side from Collins's original 25% to 20% - which Miliband announced in his January 31 Guardian interview - and then to the 15% endorsed by the NEC. So some hard bargaining took place. But it produced a rotten compromise, which leaves the PLP in effective charge of the party - a far cry from the democracy we need.

Secondly, when the five-year transition period is complete, affiliation fees will only be accepted by the party from individual levy-payers who have opted in. At present, all affiliated levy-payers get a vote in party leader and deputy leader elections. From the end of 2014, only

those levy-payers will be eligible to vote who have chosen to become "affiliated supporters" (at no extra cost), confirmed their allegiance to (unspecified) "Labour values" and linked up with a local party organisation in a constituency where they are on the electoral register. Those who "opt in" but do not become affiliated supporters will be disenfranchised.

Alongside the full party member and the affiliated supporter, there will be a new, or rather an amended, category of "registered supporter". They too must affirm their "Labour values", appear on the electoral register and be linked to their local CLP. They have no other rights than voting in a leader and deputy leader election, and in a "closed primary", should one be organised. Leader elections may be few and far between, and the only closed primary planned so far is to select Labour's candidate for London mayor in 2015. If I read Collins correctly, registered supporters must sign up afresh and pay a £3 admin fee each time they wish to get a vote in a party election. Whether his 'bait' of occasional voting rights will draw new blood towards the party, as Miliband hopes, remains very doubtful. The previous category of "supporters", who paid no fee, but were promised voting rights if their number rose to 50,000, only reached 20,000 and has now been junked.

Miliband had told *The Guardian* that he "would look at the structure of conference in the future", but the offending words about reviewing the number of trade union NEC seats and the percentage of conference vote had been removed from the final document.⁷

Unite is linking its regional political committees and political activists with the largest workplace branches to encourage its members to tick the necessary boxes to become affiliated supporters and move on from that to full party membership. The current Labour membership is about 186,000, equal to no more than 13% of Unite's.

All this means that if trade unionists get busy, affiliated supporters and new recruits could transform the largely hollowed out Constituency Labour Parties and help swing the party radically to the left ●

Notes

1. 'Harry Potter and the question of party reform', February 4: www.progressonline.org.uk/2014/02/04/harry-potter-and-the-question-of-party-reform.
2. www.socialistparty.org.uk/issue/797/18123.
3. Keir Hardie's 1892 election manifesto, when he was elected to the Commons for the first time as MP for South West Ham, declared: "I have all my life given an independent support to the Liberal Party ... I am in agreement with the present programme of the Liberal Party."
4. http://s.bsd.net/labouruk/default/page/file/a84a677f479406989c_pom6b5w60.pdf.
5. *The Guardian* February 4.
6. *Socialist Appeal* February 5.
7. Interview in *The Guardian* January 31.

Europe and the politics of fraud

John Fuller Carr examines the divisions that plague establishment politicians and takes to task the Labour Representation Committee for its cowardly, nationalist retreat



Left should have no interest in promoting xenophobia

Europe continues to enrage, divide and confuse politicians of both the right and left.

The present situation is easy to summarise. Under severe pressure from the United Kingdom Independence Party, David Cameron has committed the Tories to an in-out referendum, but not until *after* the 2015 general election. If returned to No10, he solemnly pledges to negotiate a root-and-branch reform of Britain's relationship with Brussels. A forlorn hope. François Hollande crushingly informed him at their January 2014 summit, that renegotiating EU treaties "is not a priority for France".¹

Smelling blood, Nigel Farage says he will turn the May 2014 European election into a referendum against Bulgarian and Romanian migrants and continued EU membership. Worryingly, an Open Europe poll puts Ukip on 27% - significantly ahead of Labour (23%) and the Tories (21%).² Meanwhile, Ed Miliband made a show of expressing contrition over the last Labour government getting it "wrong" over EU immigration. Prompting some Labour MPs - eg, Rochdale's Simon Danczuk - to join the "send people back" campaign. Tom Harris (Glasgow South) even declared himself a member of the "Romaphobe club."³

Clear direction

Establishment politicians find themselves confronted with a fundamental fault line. European integration has advanced qualitatively since the Treaty of Rome was signed by Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands in 1957. What was a mere customs union - born of the cold war - has become a German-dominated giant, embracing 500 million people and 28 countries, with free trade and the free movement of labour. It is the world's biggest home market, with a combined GDP of about \$17.2 trillion - as compared to \$16.7 trillion for the US and \$5.9 trillion for Japan.

Politically, however, the EU resembles something like the creaking Austro-Hungarian empire, which straddled 19th century *Mitteleuropa*. The EU is an amalgam of unevenly developed state units. But the direction is clear. Wider, in the form of candidates like Iceland, Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Deeper, in the form of

politico-legal institutions. The EU has a council of ministers, the European Commission, an elected parliament, a European Court of Justice ... and then, of course, there is the euro: a currency which unites 18 countries.

Behind the integration lies a blood-drenched past. Twice in the 20th century Europe has been the cockpit of global conflict. Both times Europe was left devastated, exhausted and much reduced. World War I saw the collapse of the Russian, German and Austro-Hungarian autocracies. The main focus of world economic activity shifted from Europe to the Atlantic and America. Twenty-five years later, under the terms of the Yalta agreement, half the continent was incorporated into the Soviet Union's sphere of influence and, through bureaucratic revolution, 'sovietised'.

As to western Europe, it was shorn of the glories - and booty - of empire. Humiliatingly it had to rely on the US nuclear umbrella to counter the much exaggerated threat from the east. However, avoiding another internecine conflict and creating a bulwark against bureaucratic socialism drove the states of western Europe, in particular Federal Germany and France, towards an historic compromise.

There is, needless to say, another factor at work. Europe both cooperates and competes with the US and Japan. They might have smaller home markets, yet, due to an historically constituted nationality and an economically centralised territory, they are blessed with a single working class and a single political and business elite. Labour power, like every other commodity, can easily move and therefore be bought and sold anywhere within the US or Japan. Europe is divided not only by history, but culture. Commodities can freely circulate - but not the special commodity, labour-power. Language constitutes a material barrier, except for those with higher education (worst-paid labour being a not insubstantial exception). A multinational, and therefore fragmented, political and business elite constitutes a similar handicap. To be successful the EU must, as a minimum, therefore, forge a federal superstate, from where its transnationals can survive against the rising legion of foreign rivals.

The ongoing process of European

integration has caused deep divisions in Britain. There were, in the late 1940s and early 50s, hubristic dreams of rebuilding the British empire. Suez 1956 put a stop to that. The US had unmistakably become top dog and would permit no imperial rivals. Barred from the Common Market in 1963 by de Gaulle's veto, the British ruling class hung onto the conceit of being a major world power and actually managed to keep Europe divided through the European Free Trade Area. But that did not amount to a viable strategy. Britain eventually entered the European Economic Community in 1973 under Edward Heath's Tory government (along with its Danish and Irish EFTA allies). The unwritten agreement with Washington was that Britain would play the role of a US Trojan horse.

Apart from our far right around Roy Jenkins, the Labour Party was critical of the terms and conditions. Nonetheless in 1975 Harold Wilson's government successfully fought a referendum on the issue of continued membership. The main opposition came from a Tony Benn-Enoch Powell popular front. Nevertheless, we remained officially uneasy about Europe till the leadership of John Smith and then the government of Tony Blair. A parallel shift occurred in the TUC with the appointment of John Monks.

New Labour and its coterie of middle class career politicians loyally and openly served the interests of the most competitive, most internationalised, sections of British capital. Despite his tack to the left, Ed Miliband and 'One nation' Labour does exactly the same.

Of the two main parties, it is the Tories who are organically split today. Though Cameron now calls for a "fundamental renegotiation" of Britain's relationship with EU, everyone knows that, come his referendum, he will call for continued membership. That cannot be said of his revolting backbenchers. As with Ukip, his Poujardists articulate the xenophobic fears and prejudices of 'middle England' and uphold the interests of the least competitive sections of capital.

If the British establishment is divided, the groups, factions and sects of the left - Labour and non-Labour alike - have proved utterly incapable of providing anything like a serious

alternative. In fact, the reformist and national socialist left adheres either to the *most* gullible or the *most* chauvinist positions on the EU.

Instinctively the national socialists recognise that European integration makes a mockery of their utopian British road to socialism. Take the No2EU election bloc - uniting the Socialist Party in England and Wales and the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain. It is virtually indistinguishable from the Tory right, Ukip and the British National Party. No2EU wants to save the pound sterling, restore British sovereignty and re-establish immigration controls to bar European incomers.

Naturally, when it comes to the likes of Peter Taafe, Robert Griffiths, Bob Crow and Brian Denny, this is all done in the name of socialism ... but it is the socialism of fools. The best that these advocates of "workers' rights" could achieve is a British version of Stalinism - ie, state slavery - and that imposed onto a capitalistically advanced country fully integrated into the world economy. What costs the lives of millions in the 1930s could only but be repeated as a still greater tragedy. Civilisation would not be advanced, but barbarically thrown back. And, unfortunately, where the CPB and SPEW have led, Socialist Resistance, Respect, the Alliance for Green Socialism, Scottish Socialist Party, Solidarity, etc, have followed - to the point of a horribly self-defeating common sense.

Of course, for Marxists, proletarian socialism - as the first stage or phase of communism - is international or it is nothing. There can be no socialism in one country, because capital, as a social relationship, exists not within the nation-state, but internationally, at the level of the global economy. Bureaucratic or national socialism just brings back all the old crap, albeit in different, highly contradictory forms. That is why as long ago as 1845 Marx and Engels emphatically rejected all localist schemes and insisted, on the contrary, that: "Empirically, communism is only possible as the act of the dominant peoples 'all at once' and simultaneously."⁴

LRC

Sadly, the leadership of the Labour Representation Committee seems to be readying itself to adopt an approach barely distinguishable from

Taafe and Griffiths. Having agreed a generally sound resolution on the EU in 2011, at its November 2013 AGM the LRC narrowly voted down a virtually identical motion in the name of "beginning" a debate on the EU. The manipulative hand of Graham Bash, Peter Firmin and co was clearly visible.

What were the politics of 2011? In contrast to the red-brown left, the LRC stood for "a Europe-wide working class response" to capitalism's crisis. Instead of opposing "European capitalist integration", the right answer is to "link up with other European workers in solidarity and struggle". Moreover, those demanding withdrawal from the EU, or opposing British entry into the European single currency, were condemned for holding to "a British nationalist position", a blunder "not altered" by tacking on a slogan like "Socialist United States of Europe". Etc, etc.⁵

Now, in the name of "kicking the debate off", we have Michael Calderbank of Brent CLP. Writing in *Labour Briefing*, he rightly takes to task those who have illusions in the progressive nature of the EU when it comes to labour legislation, social rights, etc ... All are being "eroded and undermined", he feigningly laments. Of course, what comrade Calderbank wants the LRC to do is to vote 'no' in Cameron's referendum and bank everything on a British withdrawal.

As an aside, it is worth noting the objection Marxists have traditionally had to referendums. So-called direct democracy is a chimera in any complex society. Nuances have to be considered, likely consequences predicted and alternatives closely studied. That is why Marxists advocate *indirect* democracy: ie, the election of recallable representatives who are tasked with debating and deciding political positions and stratagems. Marx certainly denounced - and in no uncertain terms - Louis Bonaparte's deployment of successive referendums to consolidate his dictatorship and excuse France's imperial adventures.⁶

The wording of the referendum question is, of course, everything. Eg, to vote 'no' was to declare oneself opposed to democratic reforms; to vote 'yes' was to vote for despotism and war. Referendums bypass representative democracy, political parties and careful deliberation. Something not lost on Adolph Hitler.

He managed to get a 90% mandate for his dictatorship on August 19 1934 - despite an almost unprecedented campaign of intimidation, there were millions of spoilt ballot papers.

Coloration

Inevitably, comrade Calderbank gives his endorsement of the 'no' campaign a socialistic coloration. Instead of "populist scapegoating" of migrants, he makes a seemingly bold call for "taking back power" and "taking control of our services and economies, on a local and national scale." Does his formula amount to a post-referendum establishment of a workers' state and the abolition of capitalism? Unlikely. Or is it an empty plea for the restoration of Keynesian economics and the politics of welfarism? Either way, the comrade says that "our membership of the EU" impedes his agenda, so "calling for a withdrawal from an international left perspective would be perfectly consistent".⁸

When it comes to the LRC's old position, the comrade dishonestly rejects any programme of fighting for a workers' Europe as akin to banking on "adequately reforming" the "existing institutions" of the EU. An obvious *non sequitur*. Nevertheless, on the basis of this crude falsification, comrade Calderbank feels he can tell us what we all know. The EU is not very democratic ... and he thinks it "extremely hard" to see how this can be changed.

The lack of imagination is as sad as it is palpable. Why those of us who want to take as our strategic point of departure not Britain, but the EU are supposed to believe in the reformability of the whole array of existing EU institutions remains to be established.

Apply his methodological approach to the British state. Over the last 30 years or so it has surely "eroded and undermined" the post-World War II consensus. Indeed, it is fair to say, successive British governments - Tory, Labour and Con-Dem - have been at the forefront of the neoliberal offensive both at home and in the EU. Should we therefore conclude with a call for the "dissolution" of

Britain, as Welsh and Scottish nationalists do, or even a working class "withdrawal" from it?

Pitifully, comrade Calderbank unintentionally shows a naive faith in the institutions of the UK state: the monarchy, the House of Commons, the House of Lords, the judiciary, the presidential prime minister, MI5, the Church of England, the standing army, etc. Can they all be "adequately" reformed so as to pave the way for a workers' Britain? Clearly, the implication in comrade Calderbank's polemic is, yes, they can.

Russia

Interestingly, prior to the October Revolution of 1917, Lenin and the Bolsheviks confronted similar manifestations of national socialism. The tsarist empire was a vast prison house of nations. Nevertheless, while fighting for the right of self-determination up to and including secession, the overriding, central strategy was the cementing of the highest and most extensive workers' unity throughout the tsarist empire - in order to overthrow the tsarist empire.

Unwittingly comrade Calderbank places himself in the camp of Joseph Pilsudski and his Polish Socialist Party. Formed in 1892, it adopted a national socialist programme for the reconstitution of an independent Poland - which had been all but partitioned out of existence at the 1815 Congress of Vienna between the the German, Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires. Rosa Luxemburg and Julian Marchlewski split with the PSP in 1893 over this perspective. Objective conditions, they rightly said, demanded the unity of workers - Russians, Poles, Ukrainians, Georgians, Letts, etc - against the tsarist empire.

In defence of the past - in particular in defence of the welfare state and the post-World War II social democratic consensus - comrade Calderbank presents a programme that would at best weaken the EU. It would, however, also weaken the European working class movement if its strongest detachments forced upon their capitalists a policy of

withdrawal - a road that would lead not to a national socialist paradise, but the hell of increased national exploitation and eventually counterrevolution.

Marxists do not look back fondly to the post-war social democratic settlement. No, our programme emphasises the positive advantages of the workers being organised into the largest, most centralised states. All the better to overthrow them and begin the advance to a communist society and the inspiring principle, 'From each according to their ability; to each according to their needs'.

The working class can only but suffer one cruel defeat after another if it confines itself to the politics of defence. We in Labour Party Marxists therefore raise the perspective of the politics of the offensive. Hence we say, to the extent that the EU becomes a superstate, so must the advanced part of the working class organise itself into a single, pan-European party in order to overthrow it.

The EU is undoubtedly a reactionary anti-working class institution. Amongst consenting Marxists that hardly needs proving with statistics concerning spending limits and welfare cuts. The real question is what attitude we adopt towards it. LPM stands for extreme democracy under capitalism. Concretely that means fighting for the levelling up of wages, substantive equality for women, the abolition of the council of ministers, a parliament with full powers and an armed working class.

Without such an approach, talk of socialism in Britain or a socialist Europe is nothing but a fraud ●

Notes

1. *The Daily Telegraph* January 31 2014.
2. www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2331759/UKIP-set-European-poll-success-powers-ahead-Tories-Labour.html.
3. *The Daily Telegraph* November 27 2013.
4. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 5, Moscow 1976, p49.
5. *LRC Resolutions booklet* November 2011, p11.
6. See Marx's *The eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852) and *The civil war in France* (1871). Also there is Kautsky's *Parliamentarism, direct legislation and social democracy* (1893).
7. *Labour Briefing* February 2014.
8. *Labour Briefing* February 2014.

Centre-Left Grassroots Alliance



Ken Livingstone: still time to stand against him

Is there a case for the left to field its own candidates for the NEC? Ken Williamson calls for the left to take courage

Only two NEC members, Christine Shawcroft and Dennis Skinner, voted against the Collins review on February 4, and one of the six Unite delegates, Martin Meyer, abstained.

This has caused some confusion on the left. The Centre-Left Grassroots Alliance has chosen a six-strong slate for the next NEC election ... and some comrades cannot now countenance voting for Ann Black and Ken Livingstone because they voted for the Collins review. However, backing the slate is common sense: after all, it is the only 'left' show in town. And supporting the six does not - must not - mean keeping criticisms

private. We need to engage the rank and file in political discussion on every issue, to develop understanding. Withdrawing support from NEC members would be churlish and sectarian - if the left cannot summon the courage to field its own candidates. Nominations are open until June 20. Indeed it would be quite legitimate for us on the left to put up NEC candidates in order to fight openly for our strategic aim of winning active mass support for the political programme of working class socialism, and rebuilding the trade unions and Labour Party on socialist lines as part of that strategy.

In point of fact, that would be the

best way to critique the "progressive policies" of the CLGRA slate, which dreams of a leftwing Labour government running a reformed British capitalism (Ed Miliband's vision), in which funding "improvements in housing, health, education, transport and state pensions" depends on getting the (British, capitalist) economy growing. An Ed Miliband government, like all previous Labour governments running capitalism, will attack our class and undermine and weaken the workers' movement. Rebuilding our movement from its present politically weak condition must be done in opposition to a capitalist government of any stripe ●

Aims and Principles

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.

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Leon Trotsky: no scabbing on political levy

Rearm working class with collective representation

We need to do more than defend the union link as it exists, argues Paul Demarty

As can be seen from the Collins review, the trade union role in the Labour Party is not about to disappear. Of course, down the line there may be another change, and another, until finally union influence over Labour is quietly extinguished.

There are some on the left who eagerly anticipate this eventuality, stupidly imagining that the logical result will be for the unions to bring financial muscle and prestige to whatever no-hope pet project a given group happens to have (leaving aside those ultra-leftists who consider such matters irrelevant in any case). Of the rest - those who understand that the dissolution of the union link would be a historic defeat for the British working class, taking it from a faint shadow of political representation to no representation whatsoever - not a few, naturally, are to be found in the ranks of the Labour Party.

Last November's AGM of the Labour Representation Committee voted to support the utterly ineffective Defend the Link campaign. Naturally the vote was uncontroversial. Labour Party Marxists, however, moved a second motion urging the LRC to go further and commit itself to transforming the link, overturning the legal right of individual union members to opt out of paying the political levy, and fighting more generally against state interference in the internal affairs of the workers' movement. This motion, unfortunately, proved very controversial. For the record, Graham Bash, LRC treasurer, abstained and Pete Firmin, its political secretary, voted against. However, the LPM motion was comfortably defeated.

Right to scab

Behind this superficially tactical difference are two matters of principle. The first ought to be the

most straightforward for any advocate of working class political action - the principle of *binding collective action*.

It was, in fact, put quite nicely at the LRC AGM by comrade Gary Heather, *Islington* North CLP, who criticised the individualism of "liberal philosophy" - this was based on an elitist notion that the masses should not get involved in politics. Attacks on the Labour-union link, comrade Heather correctly noted, are in fact attacks on the principle of mass political action, which for capitalist ideology amounts to mob rule.

More sharply still was it put by Trotsky, sarcastically commenting on Tory encroachments on the political levy shortly before the 1926 general strike. Union funding for Labour, even then, was what we would today call a 'political football'; a decision by the law lords in 1909 (the infamous Osborne judgment) ruled that the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS) - an ancestor to today's Rail, Maritime and Transport union - was *ultra vires* in providing financial support on the part of its members to the Labour Party. This ruling was overturned in 1913 by the Asquith government, but the right of workers to opt out was enshrined in law.

"The crux of the matter is, of course, that the workers' organisations, by asserting their anti-Liberal, 'despotic', Bolshevik right of enforced collection of the political levy, are in effect fighting for the real and concrete, and not a metaphysical possibility of parliamentary representation for the workers; while the Conservatives and the Liberals, in upholding the principles of 'personal freedom', are in fact striving to disarm the workers materially, and thereby shackle them to the bourgeois parties," Trotsky further writes.

"It is sufficient merely to take

a look at the division of roles: the trade unions are for the unconditional right to the enforced collection of the political levy; the House of Exhumed Lords is for the unconditional banning of such extortion in the name of sacred personal freedom; finally the House of Commons forces a concession from the trade unions, which amounts in practice to a 10% refund [the number of workers who opted out - PD] to the principles of Liberalism."¹

From this perspective, it is quite clear: the 'opt-out' rule is *just as much* a violation of the principle of collective political action as Miliband's 'opt-in' wheeze. Moreover, it is plainly the case that such encroachments strike at the very heart of working class politics. The bourgeoisie has the means of production, the repressive apparatus of the state, legions of paid persuaders and all manner of other means at its disposal with which to fight its corner. The working class, in the final analysis, has sheer weight of numbers on its side.

If those numbers are coordinated into conscious collective action, then no amount of yellow-press hacks, cops and slick politicians will save their bosses. Which is why the 'other side' are so very keen to make that more difficult. The right to opt out of the union political fund is *the right to scab*. So it has been since the days of the Osborne judgment.

It is depressing to see comrades on the Labour left shrinking from this perspective, given how utterly dependent their political projects are on the maintenance of the party's link with organised labour. At the LRC AGM, where the argument was not the philistine one - that arguing for a better, more democratic union link was somehow incompatible with effective resistance to attempts to weaken or break that link - it was

laughably timid.

One comrade suggested that getting rid of opting out would lead to a split in the union movement, because people would leave in disgust at handing money over to Labour (or whoever it happened to be). This was the argument of the scab Osborne himself! It completely internalises the degraded model of contemporary trade unionism as a sort of legal services provider to embattled individuals - or at best, 'traditional' apolitical unionism (which renders a political fund entirely redundant anyway).

If enforcing compliance with the political fund will cause a split in the union, the union is *already split* - just as much as a union needs to tackle old-fashioned blacklegs, it needs to enforce united political action. You do not accept the liberal (or even Tory!) prejudices of some union members as immutable. You destroy those prejudices. You win them over. That is the tradition of the working class movement - not liberal timidity.

Their law

The other serious aspect to this question is more insidious: the question of legal and state interference in the affairs of the workers' movement as a whole.

It is a matter posed very well by the historic case of the Osborne judgment, although such interference is as old as workers' organisations themselves. The argument of the law lords was that the ASRS was "a lawful society at common law", and as such subject to legal restrictions on the demands it was entitled to put on its members. The jargon of the legal profession conceals what is from the point of view of any democrat a flagrant absurdity. The ASRS never *asked* to be a 'lawful society'; its freedom of association is rendered moot by a decision of the courts

which serves only to place arbitrary restrictions on its activity.

A more recent case exemplifies this problem even more sharply. Viva Palestina, George Galloway's aid-to-Gaza initiative, never sought registration with the Charity Commission - but nevertheless, the latter *unilaterally declared* it to be a charity, and on that basis immediately sequestered its funds for breaking regulations pertaining to support for political causes!

Freedom of association is not a freebie that comes with bourgeois society. The "liberal philosophy" referred to by Gary Heather abhors the collective action of the masses for good reason, and seeks to undermine it at every turn. Allowing the bourgeois state to set the limits of working class organisation is a sure way to defeat; the judicialisation of industrial relations has closely tracked the deepening weakness of organised labour, and this is not a coincidence.

Astonishingly, even this aspect of the LPM motion was opposed by some. We were told that opposing state interference in union affairs was anti-working class - because, after all, we want unions to be subject to the minimum wage and health and safety legislation! Comrades, if you go down that road, we can all kiss goodbye to the pittance that is the minimum wage and patchy workplace protections altogether - because only effective working class action, in trade unions and 'high' politics, can get even such crumbs as those, and imagining somehow that bourgeois law is neutral in affairs of the class struggle is the surest way yet invented to disarm the class ●

Notes

1. www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/britain/wibg/ch07.htm