



LABOUR PARTY MARXISTS

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End the witch-hunt

Once the Labour Party was characterised by tolerance and inclusion, all working class organisations were welcome - no longer. **James Marshall** of Labour Party Marxists explores the history

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We in the Labour Party are in the midst of a terrible purge. Here are four examples.

- Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union general secretary Ronnie Draper has been suspended from membership and thereby prevented from voting in the Labour leadership election.

Why? An unidentified tweet.

- Tony Greenstein is likewise suspended. A well known Jewish anti-Zionist, he faces baseless charges of being an anti-Semite. His real crime is to oppose the state of Israel ... and Labour's pro-Zionist right wing.

- Then there is Jill Mountford, an executive member of the Momentum. She has been

expelled. Once again, why? Six years ago, in the May 2010 general election, the comrade stood for the Alliance for Workers' Liberty against Harriet Harman. A protest against the acceptance of Con-Dem austerity politics, albeit based on a stupid dismissal of the Labour Party as virtually indistinguishable from the US Democrats. However, since

then comrade Mountford vows she has supported only Labour candidates.

- Perhaps the most ridiculous disciplinary case is Catherine Starr's. Having shared a video clip of Dave Grohl's band she ecstatically wrote: "I fucking love the Foo Fighters". The thought police nabbed her under the ban on "racist, abusive or foul

language, abuse against women, homophobia or anti-Semitism at meetings, on social media or in any other context." Yes, using the word "fucking" in any context, can, nowadays be deemed a breach of the Labour Party's norms of behaviour.

Unsurprisingly then, there are thousands of Drapers, Greensteins, Mountfords and

Starrs. And it is clear what general secretary Iain McNicol, the compliance unit and the Labour right are up to. Create a climate where almost any leftwing public statement, past action or use of unofficial English can be branded as unacceptable, as threatening, as violating the Blairite 'safe spaces' policy. Bar, ban and banish the maximum number of Jeremy Corbyn supporters. Swing things in favour of Owen Smith. True, the right's chances of success are remote. The odds against citizen Smith are far too great. Nonetheless, this is clearly what the purge is all about.

Meanwhile, despite his massive £2.1 million donation to the Liberal Democrats in June, Lord David Sainsbury, a minister under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, is, at least as things stand today, free to vote in the leadership election. Nor are former Tory or Ukip members suspended or expelled. That despite their undisputed past support for non-Labour candidates. And, of course, there are those MPs who have been throwing one lying accusation after another against the left for being Nazi stormtroopers, anti-Semites or Trot infiltrators.

The same MPs have attempted to undermine Jeremy Corbyn's leadership at every turn. Now, having failed with the anti-Semitism campaign, they are furiously using the capitalist media to spread rumours of an imminent split and getting hold of the Labour Party's name, offices and assets through the courts. They have gone untouched. A crime in itself.

Unlike John McDonnell we do not complain of "double standards". We in Labour Party Marxists forthrightly oppose the suspension and expulsion of socialists, leftwingers, working class partisans. All of them, without exception, ought to be immediately reinstated. Whatever our criticisms they are assets who should be valued. It is the treacherous right, the splitters, who deserve to be purged.

There is surely nothing controversial about a Marxist making such a case. After all, the ongoing civil war in the Labour Party is a *concentrated* manifestation of the struggle of class against class. Labour's much expanded base faces an onslaught by the pro-capitalist apparatus of Brewer's Green bureaucrats, MPs, MEPs, councillors, etc. Under such circumstances we Marxists are obliged to actively take sides.

What then should we make of Robert Griffiths, general secretary of the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain? He grovellingly wrote to Iain McNicol, assuring him that the CPB "does not engage in entryism".¹ More than that, comrade Griffiths parades his spinelessness:

According to reports in *The Guardian* and other media outlets ... Labour Party staff have produced a research paper [that] links the Communist Party to 'entryism' in the Labour Party. In particular, that research paper cites a report made to our party's executive committee [that] on June 25 declared that "defending the socialist leadership of the Labour Party at all costs" should be a priority for communists. Nowhere in that executive committee report ... do we propose that our members join or register with the Labour Party. "At all costs" is a rhetorical flourish that cannot, obviously, be taken literally!

So the CPB should not be taken at its word. It will not defend the Corbyn leadership "at all costs". And, prostrating himself still further before the witch-finder general, Griffiths continues:

Should you or your staff have any evidence that Communist Party members have joined the Labour Party without renouncing their CP membership, or engaged in any similar subterfuge, please inform me, so that action can be taken against them for bringing our party into disrepute.²

Let us be clear about what is being said here: in the middle of a brutal civil war, with the Labour left facing a concerted witch-hunt, the CPB's Robert Griffiths wants to be seen

as standing shoulder to shoulder with Iain McNicol. He even offers to help McNicol out in hunting down any CPB member who has decided to become a registered Labour Party supporter. To my personal knowledge there are more than a few of them. Anyway, not to leave a shadow of doubt, Griffiths signs off "With comradely regards". A giveaway as to where his true loyalties really lie.

Following Tom Watson's dodgy dossier, alleging that "far-left infiltrators are taking over the Labour Party", Griffiths issued a follow-up statement. Again this excuse for a communist leader reassures McNicol that membership of his CPB is "incompatible with membership of the Labour Party by decision of both party leaderships".³

Origins

How exactly Griffiths' organisation arrived at its ban on Labour Party members joining the CPB and the ban on CPB members joining the Labour Party need not concern us here. Presumably its roots lie in the constitutionalism embraced by the 'official' CPGB with its turn to the cross-class politics of the popular front. This was sanctioned by the 5th Congress of the Communist International in 1935 under Stalin's direct instructions.

Yet the CPB claims to be the unbroken continuation of the 'official' CPGB, going back to its foundation in 1920. Nonetheless, as we shall show, it is clear that that a fundamental break occurred. No less importantly, the same can be said of the Labour Party.

From its origins our Labour Party was a federal party. A united front of all working class organisations with, yes, especially at first, decidedly limited objectives.

JH Holmes, delegate of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, moved this truly historic resolution at the 1899 TUC:

That this Congress, having regard to its decisions in former years, and with a view to securing better representation of the interests of Labour in the House of Commons, hereby instructs the Parliamentary Committee to invite the cooperation of all cooperative, socialistic, trade unions and other working class organisations to jointly cooperate on lines mutually agreed upon, in convening a special congress of representatives from such above-named organisations as may be willing to take part to devise ways and means of securing the return of an increased number of Labour members in the next parliament.⁴

His resolution was opposed by the miners' union on the basis of impracticability, but found support from the dockers, the railway servants and shop assistants unions. After a long debate the resolution was narrowly carried by 546,000 to 434,000 votes.

The TUC's parliamentary committee oversaw the founding conference of the Labour Representation Committee in February 1900. The 129 delegates, representing 500,000 members, finally agreed to establish a distinct Labour Party in parliament, with its own whips, policies, finances, etc.

An executive committee was also elected. It would prepare lists of candidates, administer funds and convene an annual conference. Beside representatives of affiliated trade unions, the newly formed NEC would also include the socialist societies: the Fabians, the Independent Labour Party and the Social Democratic Federation. In fact, they were allocated five out of the 12 NEC seats (one Fabian, and two each from the ILP and SDF). Given the small size of these socialist societies compared with the trade unions, it is obvious that they were treated with extreme generosity. Presumably their "advanced" views were highly regarded.⁵

True, for the likes of Keir Hardie the formation of the Labour Party marked something of a tactical retreat. He had long sought some kind of a socialist party. However, to secure an alliance with the

trade unions he and other ILPers were prepared to formally limit the Labour Party to nothing more than furthering working class interests by getting "men sympathetic with the aims and demands of the labour movement" into the House of Commons.⁶

The delegates of the SDF proposed that the newly established Labour Party commit itself to the "class war and having as its ultimate object the socialisation of the means of production and exchange" - a formulation rejected by a large majority. In the main the trade unions were still Liberal politically. Unfortunately, as a result of this vote, the next annual conference of the SDF voted by 54 to 14 to withdraw from the Labour Party. Many SDF leaders came to bitterly "regret the decision".⁷

It should be recalled that neither Marx nor Engels had much time for the SDF nor its autocratic leader, Henry Hyndman. The SDF often took a badly conceived sectarian approach. Instead of linking up with the trade unions, it would typically stand aloof. Eg, faced with the great industrial unrest of 1910-14, Hyndman rhetorically asked: "Can anything be imagined more foolish, more harmful, more - in the widest sense of the word - unsocial than a strike?"⁸ Of course, it is quite possible to actively support trade unions in their struggles over wages, conditions, etc, and to patiently and steadfastly advocate radical democracy and international socialism. Indeed without doing just that there can be no hope for a mass socialist party here in Britain.

However, the SDF is too often casually dismissed by historians. Eg, Henry Pelling describes it as "a rather weedy growth in the political garden".⁹ True, its Marxism was typically lifeless, dogmatic and with Hyndman mixed with more than a tinge of anti-Semitism. **Thus for him the Boer war was instigated by "Jew financial cliques and their hangers-on"**.¹⁰ Yet the SDF was "the first modern socialist organisation of national importance" in this country.¹¹ Karl Marx disliked it, Fredrick Engels despaired of it, William Morris, John Burns, Tom Mann and Edward Aveling left it. But the SDF survived. There were various breakaways. However, they either disappeared, like the Socialist League, remained impotent sects, like the Socialist Party of Great Britain, or could manage little more than establishing a regional influence, as with the Socialist Labour Party on Clydeside. Meanwhile the SDF continued as the "major representative" of what passed for Marxism till 1911, when it merged with a range of local socialist societies to become the British Socialist Party.¹²

Not that sectarianism was entirely vanquished. The first conference of the BSP voted, by an overwhelming majority, to "seek direct and independent affiliation" to the Second International.¹³ In other words, not through the Labour Party-dominated British section of the Second International.

However, despite that, the BSP began to overcome its Labour-phobia. Leading figures such as Henry Hyndman, J Hunter Watts and Dan Irving eventually came out in favour of affiliation. So too did Zelda Kahan for the left. Withdrawal from the Labour Party, she argued, had been a mistake. Outside the Labour Party the BSP was seen as hostile, as fault-finding, as antagonistic. Inside, the BSP would get a wider hearing and win over the "best" rank-and-file forces.¹⁴

Affiliation was agreed, albeit by a relatively narrow majority. Efforts then began to put this into effect. The formal application for affiliation was submitted in June 1914. And in 1916 - things having been considerably delayed by the outbreak of World War I - the BSP gained affiliation to the Labour Party. Note, the BSP also in effect expelled the pro-war right wing led by Hyndman.

Labour debates

Interestingly, the International Socialist Bureau - the Brussels-based permanent executive of the Second International - meeting in October 1908, had agreed to Labour Party affiliation ... and thus, given its numbers, ensured its domination of the

British section. For our present purposes the exchanges between the dozen or so national party representatives gathered in Brussels are well worth revisiting.

According to the rules of the Second International, there could only be two types of affiliate organisations. Firstly, socialist parties "which recognise the class struggle". Secondly, working class organisations "whose standpoint is that of the class struggle" (ie, trade unions).¹⁵

During these times the Labour Party positively avoided calling itself socialist. Nor, as we have seen, did it expressly recognise the principle of the class struggle. However, despite that, the Labour Party was admitted to the August 1907 Stuttgart congress of the International. My guess would be that it had observer status. Why was it admitted? Lenin characterised the Labour Party as an "organisation of a mixed type", standing between the two types defined in the rules. In other words, the Labour Party was part political party, part a political expression of the trade unions. Crucially, the Labour Party marked the break from Liberalism of the vitally important working class in Britain. That could only but be welcomed.

At the October 1908 meeting of the ISB, Bruce Glasier of the ILP, demanded the *direct* recognition of the Labour Party as an affiliate. He praised the Labour Party, its growth, its parliamentary group, its organic bonds with the trade unions, etc. Objectively, he said, this signified the movement of the working class in Britain towards socialism. Meanwhile, as a typical opportunist, Glasier lambasted doctrinaire principles, formulas and catechisms.

Karl Kautsky, the Second International's leading theoretician, replied. Kautsky emphatically dissociated himself from Glasier's obvious contempt for principles, but wholly supported the affiliation of the Labour Party, as a party waging the class struggle in practice. He moved the following resolution:

Whereas by previous resolutions of the international congresses all organisations adopting the standpoint of the proletarian class struggle and recognising the necessity for political action have been accepted for membership, the International Bureau declares that the British Labour Party is admitted to International Socialist congresses, because, while not expressly accepting the proletarian class struggle, in practice the Labour Party conducts this struggle, and adopts its standpoint, inasmuch as the party is organised independently of the bourgeois parties.¹⁶

Kautsky was backed up by the Austrians, Édouard Vaillant of the French section, and, as the voting showed, the majority of the socialist parties and groups in the smaller European countries. Opposition came first from Henry Hyndman, representing the SDF. He wanted to maintain the status quo. Until the Labour Party *expressly* recognised the principle of the class struggle and the aim of socialism it should not be an affiliate. He found support from Angele Roussel (the second French delegate and a follower of Jules Guesde), Ilya Rubanovich of Russia's Socialist Revolutionary Party and Roumen Avramov, delegate of the revolutionary wing of the Bulgarian social democrats.

Lenin spoke on behalf of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. He agreed with the first part of Kautsky's resolution. Lenin argued that it was impossible to turn down the Labour Party: ie, what he called "the parliamentary representation of the trade unions".¹⁵ After all, the ISB admitted trade unions, including those which had allowed themselves to be represented by bourgeois parliamentarians. But, said Lenin, "the second part of Kautsky's resolution is wrong, because *in practice* the Labour Party is not a party really independent of the Liberals, and does not pursue a fully independent class policy". Lenin therefore proposed an amendment that the end of the resolution, beginning

LONDON COMMUNIST FORUM

Sundays, 5pm: Weekly political meeting and study group organised jointly by Labour Party Marxists and CPGB. Details in *Weekly Worker*.

VENUE:

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with the word "because", should read as follows: "because it [the Labour Party] represents the first step on the part of the really proletarian organisations of Britain towards a conscious class policy and towards a *socialist workers' party*".¹⁷

However, Kautsky refused to accept the amendment. In his reply, he argued that the International Socialist Bureau could not adopt decisions based on "expectations".

But the main struggle was between the supporters and the opponents of Kautsky's resolution as a whole. When it was about to be voted on, Victor Adler, the Austro-Marxist, proposed that the resolution be divided into two parts. This was done and both parts were carried by the ISB: the first with three against and one abstention, and the second with four against and one abstention. Thus Kautsky's resolution became the agreed position. Rubanovich, the Socialist Revolutionary, abstained on both votes. Lenin also reports what Adler - who spoke after him but before Kautsky's second speech - said: "Lenin's proposal is tempting, but it cannot make us forget that the Labour Party is now outside the bourgeois parties. It is not for us to judge how it did this. We recognise the fact of progress."¹⁸

The ISB dispute over the Labour Party continued in the socialist press. Fending off charges of "heresy" from leftist critics, Kautsky elaborated his ideas in a 1909 *Neue Zeit* article, 'Sects or class parties'. Basically he argued that, unlike Germany and other mainland European countries, a mass workers' party in Britain is impossible without linking up with the trade unions. Unless that happened, there could be nothing but sects and small circles.¹⁹

In the *Labour Leader*, the ILP's paper, Bruce Glasier rejoiced that the ISB not only recognised the Labour Party (which was true), but also "vindicated the policy of the ILP" (which was not true). Another ILPer, giving his impression of the Brussels meeting of the ISB, complained about the absence of the "ideal and ethical aspect of socialism". Instead we "had ... the barren and uninspiring dogma of the class war".²⁰

As for Hyndman, writing in the SDF's *Justice*, he expressed his anger at the ISB majority. They are "whittlers-away of principle to suit the convenience of trimmers". "I have not the slightest doubt," writes Hyndman, "that if the British Labour Party had been told plainly that they either had to accept socialist principles ... or keep away altogether, they would very quickly have decided to bring themselves into line with the International Socialist Party."²¹

Lenin too joined the fray. He still considered Kautsky to be wrong. By stating in his resolution that the Labour Party "does not expressly accept the proletarian class struggle", Kautsky voiced a certain "expectation", a certain "judgement" as to what the policy of the Labour Party is now and what that policy should be. But Kautsky expressed this *indirectly*, and in such a way that it amounted to an assertion which, first, is incorrect in substance, and secondly, provides a basis for opportunists in the ILP to misrepresent his ideas.

By separating in *parliament* (but not in terms of its whole policy) from the two bourgeois parties, the Labour Party is "taking the first step towards

socialism and towards a class policy of the proletarian mass organisations". This, Lenin optimistically stated, is not an "expectation, but a fact". A "fact" which compelled the ISB to admit the Labour Party into the International. Putting things this way, Lenin thought, "would make hundreds of thousands of British workers, who undoubtedly respect the decisions of the International, but have not yet become full socialists, ponder once again over the question why they are regarded as having taken only the *first* step, and what the *next* steps along this road should be".

Lenin had no intention of laying down details about those "next steps". But they were necessary, as Kautsky acknowledged in his resolution, albeit only indirectly. However, the use of an indirect formulation made it appear that the International was "certifying that the Labour Party was *in practice* waging a consistent class struggle, as if it was sufficient for a workers' organisation to form a separate labour group in parliament in order *in its entire conduct* to become independent of the bourgeoisie!"²²

The International, Lenin concluded, would undoubtedly have acted wrongly had it not expressed its complete support for the vital first step forward taken by the mass of workers in forming the Labour Party. But it does not in the least follow from this that the Labour Party "can already be recognised as a party in practice independent of the bourgeoisie, as a party waging the class struggle, as a socialist party, etc".

Bolshevism

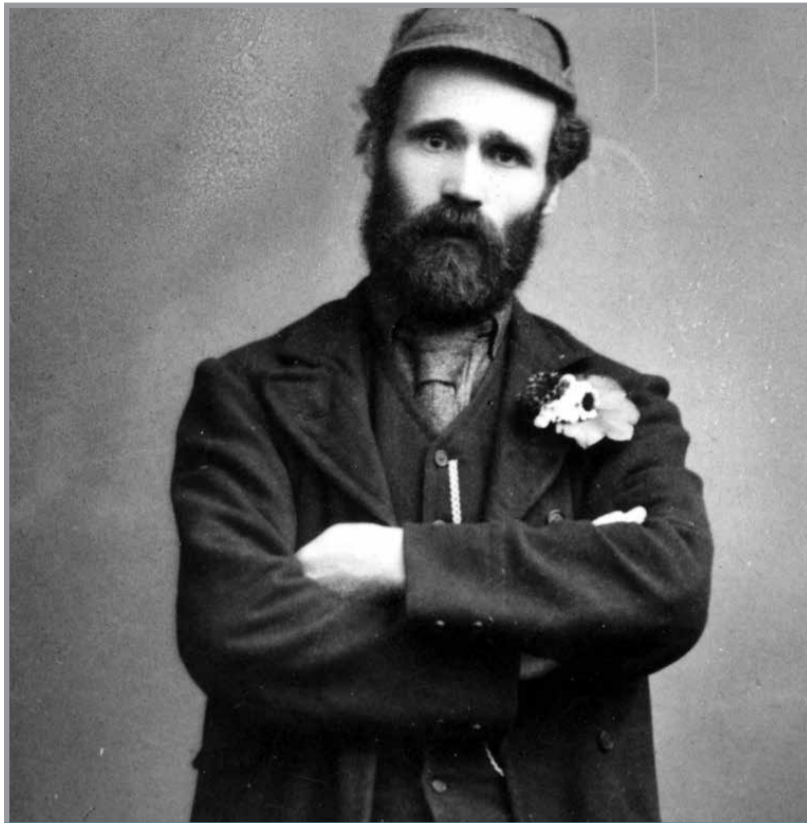
The October revolution in Russia found unanimous and unstinting support in the BSP. A number of its émigré comrades returned home and took up important roles in the Soviet government. Bolshevik publications were soon being translated into English: eg, Lenin's *State and revolution*. Money too flowed in.

The Leeds conference of the BSP in 1918 enthusiastically declared its solidarity with the Bolsheviks and a wish to emulate their methods and achievements. And under the influence of the Bolsheviks the BSP adopted a much more active, much more agitational role in the Labour Party and the trade unions. In the words of Fred Shaw, instead of standing aloof from the "existing organisations" of the working class, we should "win them for Marxism".²³ Needless to say, the BSP constituted the main body that went towards the historic formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain over July 31-August 1 1920. Given BSP affiliation, and the fact that in 1918 the Labour Party introduced individual membership, there can be no doubt that the bulk of CPGBers were card-carrying members of the Labour Party. Dual membership being the norm, as it was in the Fabians and ILP.

However, instead of simply informing Arthur Henderson, the Labour Party's secretary, that the BSP had changed its name, the CPGB, following Lenin's advice, applied for affiliation. Lenin thought the CPGB was in a win-win situation. If affiliation was accepted, this would open up the Labour Party rank and file to communist influence. If affiliation was not accepted, this would expose the Labour leaders for what they really were: namely "reactionaries of the worst kind".

With 20:20 foresight it would probably have been better for the CPGB to have presented itself merely as the continuation of the BSP. After all, gaining a divorce is far harder than turning down a would-be suitor. Needless to say, upholding its commitment to British imperialism and thereby fearing association with the Bolshevik revolution, the Labour apparatus, along with the trade union bureaucracy, determined that the CPGB application had to be rejected.

The "first step towards socialism and towards a class policy" was thereby thrown into reverse. Instead of being a united front of the organised working class, the leadership of the Labour Party began to cohere a tightly controlled, thoroughly



Keir Hardie MP: a compromise

respectable, explicitly anti-Marxist Labour Party.

Henderson replied to the CPGB application for affiliation by saying that he did not consider that the principles of the communists accorded with those of the Labour Party. To which the CPGB responded by asking whether the Labour Party proposed to "exclude from its ranks" all those who were committed to the "political, social and economic emancipation of the working class". Did Henderson want to "impose acceptance of parliamentary constitutionalism as an article of faith on its affiliated societies"?²⁴ The latter bluntly replied that there was an "insuperable difference" between the two parties.

A good many Labour Party activists rejected Henderson's characterisation of the CPGB as, in effect, mad, bad and dangerous to know. Nonetheless, the Labour apparatus never experienced any difficulty in mustering large majorities against CPGB affiliation. Eg, in June 1921 there was a 4,115,000 to 224,000 conference vote rejecting the CPGB.

Not that the CPGB limped on as an isolated sect. Affiliation might have been rejected, but there was still dual membership. In 1922, two CPGB members won parliamentary seats as Labour candidates: JT Walton Newbold (Motherwell and Wishaw) and Shapurji Saklatvala (Battersea North).

Subsequently, Labour's national executive committee was forced to temporarily drop its attempt to prevent CPGB members from being elected as annual conference delegates. The June 26-29 1923 London conference had 36 CPGB members as delegates, "as against six at Edinburgh", the previous year.²⁵ Incidentally, the 1923 conference once again rejected CPGB affiliation, this time by 2,880,000 to 366,000 votes.

Nonetheless, the general election in December 1923 saw Walton Newbold (Motherwell) and Willie Gallacher (Dundee) standing as CPGB candidates. 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 candidates, while Alec Geddes (Greenock) and Aitkin Ferguson (Glasgow Kelvingrove) were *unofficial* Labour candidates, there being no official Labour candidate in either constituency. Despite a not inconsiderable increase in the communist vote, none were elected.²⁶

A ban on CPGB members standing as Labour Party candidates swiftly followed.

Yet, although Labour Party organisations were instructed not to support CPGB candidates, this was met with defiance, not the connivance nowadays personified by Robert Griffiths. In the run-up to the October 1924 general election, Battersea North Labour Party overwhelmingly endorsed Shapurji Saklatvala; Joe Vaughan was unanimously endorsed by Bethnal Green SW Constituency Labour Party and William Paul similarly by the Rusholme CLP executive committee. And Saklatvala was once again elected as an MP.

The 1924 Labour Party conference decision against CPGB members continuing with dual membership was reaffirmed in 1925. And, going further, trade unions were "asked not to nominate communists as delegates to Labour organisations".²⁷ Yet despite these assaults on the Labour Party's founding principles, at the end of 1926 the CPGB could report that 1,544 of its 7,900 members were still individual members of the Labour Party.

Following the defeat of the 1926 General Strike, the Labour apparatus and trade union bureaucracy wanted the movement to draw the lesson that the only way to make gains would be through increased collaboration with the capitalist boss class - Mondism. As a concomitant there was a renewed drive to intimidate, to marginalise, to drive out the communists.

The struggle proved particularly sharp in London. In the capital city around half of CPGB members were active in their CLPs. And despite claiming that it was the communists who were "splitting the movement", the bureaucracy strove to do just that. Battersea CLP was disaffiliated because it dared to back Saklatvala and refused to exclude CPGB members. Similar measures were taken against Bethnal Green CLP, where the communist ex-mayor, Joe Vaughan, was held in particularly high regard.

The left in the Labour Party fought back. The National Left Wing Movement was formed in December 1925. Its stated aim was not only to fight the bans on communists, it also sought to hold together disaffiliated CLPs.

The NLWM insisted it had no thought of superseding the Labour Party, but, instead, it sought to advance rank-and-file aspirations. In this the NLWM was considerably boosted by the newly established *Sunday Worker*. Despite being initiated, funded and edited by the CPGB, the *Sunday Worker* served as the authoritative voice of the NLWM. At its height it achieved a circulation of 100,000. The NLWM's 1925 founding conference

had nearly 100 Labour Party organisations sending delegates.

Yet the right's campaign of disaffiliations and expulsions remorselessly proceeded. The NLWM therefore found itself considerably 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). It should be added that militant union leaders, such as the miners' AJ Cook, also supported the conference.

With the counterrevolution within the revolution in the Soviet Union, the CPGB was in many ways reduced to a slave of Stalin's foreign policy. The CPGB's attitude towards the Labour Party correspondingly changed. Leaders such as Harry Pollitt and Rajani Palme Dutt denounced the Labour Party as nothing but "a third capitalist party" (shades of Peter Taaffe and the Socialist Party in England and Wales).

As an integral part of this self-inflicted madness, in 1929 the *Sunday Worker* was closed and the NLWM wound up. In effect the CPGB returned to its SDF roots. Ralph Miliband regretfully comments that the CPGB's so-called new line "brought it to the nadir of its influence".²⁸ Sectarianism could only but spur on the right's witch-hunt. In 1930 the Labour Party apparatus produced its first 'proscribed list'. Members of proscribed organisations became ineligible for individual membership of the Labour Party and CLPs were instructed not to affiliate to proscribed organisations. Needless to say, most of those organisation were closely associated with the CPGB.

However, what began with action directed against the CPGB-led National Unemployed Workers' Movement and the National Minority Movement has now morphed into the catch-all ban on "racist, abusive or foul language, abuse against women, homophobia or anti-Semitism at meetings, on social media or in any other context". Nowadays the Labour Party apparatus can, at a whim, expel or suspend anyone.

Surely, beginning with the Liverpool conference, it is time to put an end to the bans and proscriptions. We certainly have within our power the possibility of once again establishing the Labour Party as the united front of all working class organisations in Britain ●

Notes

1. My emphasis - see <https://andrewgodsell.wordpress.com/2016/08/29/labour-suspension-appeal-process>.
2. <https://21centurymanifesto.wordpress.com/2016/07/12/communist-infiltration-of-labour>.
3. *Morning Star* August 12 2016.
4. BC Roberts *The Trade Union Congress 1868-1921* London 1958, p166.
5. *Ibid* p167.
6. Quoted in R Miliband *Parliamentary socialism* London 1960, p17.
7. M Crick *The history of the Social Democratic Federation* Keel 1994, p97.
8. *Ibid* p230.
9. H Pelling *Origins of the Labour Party* Oxford 1976, p172.
10. M Crick *The history of the Social Democratic Federation* Keel 1994, p159.
11. M Crick *The history of the Social Democratic Federation* Keel 1994, p8.
12. *Ibid* p8.
13. *Ibid* p248.
14. *Ibid* p255.
15. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 15, Moscow 1977, p233.
16. *Ibid* p234.
17. *Ibid* pp234-35.
18. *Ibid* p235.
19. www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1909/07/unions.htm.
20. Quoted in VI Lenin *CW* Vol 15, Moscow 1977, p238.
21. Quoted in *ibid* p239.
22. *Ibid* pp235-36.
23. Quoted in M Crick *The history of the Social Democratic Federation* Keel 1994, p281.
24. Quoted in R Miliband *Parliamentary socialism* London 1960, p87.
25. JT Murphy, 'The Labour Party conference' *Communist Review* August 1923, Vol 4, No4: www.marxists.org/archive/murphy-jt/1923/08/labour_conf.htm.
26. J Klugmann *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain* Vol 1, London 1968, pp361-62.
27. N Branson *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1927-1941* London 1985, p5.
28. R Miliband *Parliamentary socialism* London 1960, p153.

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 ●

Another Dodgy Dossier

Tom Watson is worried about 'infiltrators': **Jim Grant** is less than impressed with his conspiracy theories

"I was first taught to spot a Trot at 50 yards in 1965 by Mr Bert Ramelson, Yorkshire industrial organiser of the Communist Party," Jack Straw wrote in a briefly infamous letter to the *Independent*¹. It is a matter of some regret that Straw never passed any tips on to Tom Watson, deputy leader of the Labour Party.

In the raging civil war over Labour's future, Watson is playing a most particular role. He is, of course, a partisan of the right, according to the current polarisation, albeit historically a muscular centrist and Brownite. Yet his role is to present a lawyerly facade; he is the 'responsible' guy who does what he does for the good of the party. Frankly, it was a threadbare outfit even when he became deputy, and it is even scantier now. Loyalty to the party means, so far as Watson and his like are concerned, hostility to the left. For all his 'fixer' credentials, Watson has screwed this one up royally: all his backroom manoeuvres, all his 'talks' and press briefings, and where has it gotten his colleagues? Merely back to exactly where they were last year: staring down the barrel of another humiliating defeat at the hands of ordinary members.

It is perhaps that which explains the sheer desperation of Watson's behaviour recently - and, to return to Straw's Stalinoid missive to the *Indy*, the desperation of his 'dossier' of evidence concerning far-left infiltration.²

Rather inevitably, given the return to public consciousness of the 2003 invasion of Iraq since the Chilcot report was published, Watson's evidence has acquired the 'dodgy dossier' soubriquet; and there are certain similarities between it and the notorious 'evidence' of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction presented to the press and parliament in September 2002. Principally, there is the fact that much of it is simply false, deliberately or otherwise; and of the rest, everything is presented in an entirely misleading light.

Rogues' gallery

So who are the nefarious Trots steamrolling into the Labour Party? At the top of the list - inexplicably, given that they might be the smallest of the lot - is *Red Flag*. Watson and his valiant team of hurried Googlers have managed to work out that *RF* is the continuation of Workers Power. The comrades are guilty of - shock, horror! - distributing a model motion against the manoeuvres of the parliamentary party against the leadership.

Next is Labour Party Marxists - in Watson's view, a "project" of the CPGB, which is in turn a "Trotskyist party" (it is neither Trotskyist, nor a Party; but the distinctions probably appear theological to the intrepid Trots-potters of Brewers' Green, for whom no doubt Maoists are Trotskyists for present purposes too, and also our handful of confused old left-communist friends who find themselves today with Labour Party cards ...). Our great crime? Arguing for global proletarian revolution, for wholesale purging of the right, for winning Labour to a full revolutionary Marxist programme? Er, no: we support reselection of MPs (something already allowed for, to some extent, in the party's rules ...). All the rest, we thereby conclude, must be just fine by brother Watson, which is certainly a pleasant surprise! Elsewhere, Watson & co are horrified to discover our call for more people to join the unions, and more union members to engage in the life of Labour; old Tom wants none of that rubbish. The unions are quite large enough for him (especially, no doubt, as most of them are behind the leadership).

Next up is the Alliance for Workers



Tom Watson: not credible

Liberty, which is 'guilty' of much the same sort of stuff, so we will not belabour the point: much outrage, of course, is dedicated to AWL comrade Jill Mountford's senior position in Momentum. Mountford was suspended from Labour membership; it is obviously quite unacceptable to Watson that Momentum does not allow Labour's blatantly compromised Compliance Unit to determine its membership requirements. It is also worth noting that it is hardly the case that Labour is suddenly flooded with AWL members, even adjusting for the group's size: most of those to have fallen foul of disciplinary proceedings have been Labour members for years. Their membership can hardly be blamed on Jeremy Corbyn.

Stupidity

The three groups aforementioned, though all tiny compared to the massive influx of new members, at least have the virtue of operating within it.

Tom Watson wants to go further, however. We can see why: there's simply not enough Trots on that list for even the most gullible idiot to consider it an invasion. Add us all up, and there is probably a numerically greater scourge of 9/11 truthers to worry about. There is a wider Trotskyoid fringe in the Labour left that Watson *could* have mentioned, of course, but most of these people - like AWL members - have been hanging around for a long old time. It is still not enough.

Thus he insists on trying to rope in the two largest Trotskyist organisations in Britain - we speak of the Socialist Party in England and Wales, and the Socialist Workers Party. At this point, Watson's document descends entirely into stupidity. For both these organisations have *refused* to urge people to join the Labour Party.

Thus the 'evidence' against SPEW, which amounts in the first instance to the fact that they claimed to help organise a few Momentum meetings, and secondly that a motion passed at Unite's policy conference in favour of mandatory reselection was moved by a SPEW member. What, does Watson want SPEW members out of Unite now? Does Unite not get to decide its own policy? Is it not a greater concern for greaseball careerists like Watson that *people were willing to vote for it?*

The punchline to Tom's tour of the British

far left is the SWP. Surely not? "SWP sets up training course to infiltrate Labour", screams the sub-headline. You can imagine the embarrassment at *Weekly Worker* towers, dear reader! We have been keeping close tabs on the SWP for decades; how can we have missed such a major change of course? Except, of course, that the truth is the *exact opposite*: the link Watson helpfully provides brings us to a list of articles in SWP publications, all of which urge readers *not* to join the Labour Party.³ It is as if some neo-Nazi had a headline along the lines of "Finally, proof that the holocaust never happened", and then linked readers to Raul Hilberg's *Destruction of the European Jews*.

There will no doubt be some who think this comparison a little gauche. Alas! What else do we have before us than a conspiracy theory quite as absurd? At least holocaust deniers, 9/11 truthers, birthers and anti-vaxxers actually *believe* the nonsense they peddle - which Watson surely cannot. How thick does he think his audience is?

Tom's friends

Come to think of it, *who* does he think his audience is?

The memo was ostensibly for the information of Jeremy Corbyn and his 'people', but they are surely quite aware of the limited extent, such as it is, of Trotskyists coming to the Labour Party. Perhaps it is a last ditch appeal to wavering voters in the Labour leadership poll, suggesting that the voice they hear telling them to vote for Corbyn is the same voice that shrilly hawks them a copy of *Socialist Worker* outside the tube on a Saturday morning ... but can there be *any* waverers at all?

Let us advance another, more likely hypothesis: Tom's dossier has the same purpose as Tony Blair's 'Alice in Wonderland' intervention in last year's Leader contest: that is, to raise a standard for the troops on *his* side. It will yield an infusion of publicity from the yellow press. It will rally the despondent among the Progress youth, and give them another absurdity to hurl at opposing forces in CLP meetings. It will remind them, like a good fighting song, of the justice of their cause and the perfidy of their enemies.

From the point of view of the 'Trots' - or, indeed, of anyone with an attention span north of ten seconds - such accusations as are contained therein are richly amusing. For what is the picture painted? That "they", the Trots, are playing silly buggers, taking things over by stealth, fighting dirty, lying about their true intentions and political outlook. Remind you of anyone?

Here is the situation as it is, not as Tom Watson would like you to think it. There is an electoral contest going on, between Jeremy Corbyn, a more-or-less principled, run-of-the-mill Labour leftist of some years standing, and Owen Smith, whose politics are entirely undistinguished, and is running on the basis that he is not Jeremy Corbyn. Smith, in other words, is deliberately obfuscating his politics, since it is plain to him that he would not win on the basis that he was a jolly competent paid lobbyist for Pfizer. His supporters routinely manufacture scurrilous accusations - of physical intimidation, anti-Semitism, misogyny - against the supporters of his opponent. Those of his supporters on the National Executive Committee - *including Watson* - attempted to keep Corbyn off the ballot entirely, and - when that failed - aggressively gerrymandered the contest.

Now, some number among them whisper that - *quelle surprise* - they will not accept the result of the election if, as looks nigh on inevitable, Corbyn is returned as leader; they will instead attempt to seize the Labour Party's name, assets and status as Her Majesty's Most Loyal Opposition. This may be a serious threat, or perhaps merely more mind games; either way, the sense of entitlement is breathtaking, as is the hypocrisy of Watson, the arch-manipulator, fishing around for reds under his bed. In truth, more than 200,000 people have joined the Labour party in the last year and a half. We doubt there are 200,000 Trotskyists in the world.

Trot want?

Is there *any* truth to Watson's 'dossier'?

Well, there always is - somewhere. There certainly are some number of far-leftists in the Labour Party, and some smaller

number more than there were prior to last summer. Even those who have not joined up, like SPEW, who *insist* on maintaining a pseudo-Labourite electoral profile even under the new conditions, will vent forth about their 'support' for Jeremy, which must nevertheless come from 'outside' ... We 'Trots' are not so daft as not to recognise helpful movement in the Overton window.

There is another thing, which is more deeply ironic. The most immediate effect of little curveballs like Watson's dossier is to put the Corbyn camp on the defensive ('no, we're not Trots, honest!'). This attitude leads to desperate attempts to be *doing something*, which means tacitly accepting the justice of the right's hysterical accusations. The clearest recent example is the 'anti-Semitism' panic, but there have been depressingly many. Where the Corbyn inner circle go, Momentum's unaccountable leadership clique is sure to follow - nothing must be allowed that would embarrass the leadership, and thus people are leant on to obey Jeremy's call for a "kinder politics" (ie, do not criticise the right, do not pursue political struggle against them, and so on).

This attitude greatly benefits two groups: the first, naturally, is the right. The second is ... the 'Trots'.

For, if the official leadership of the Labour left is paralysed by timidity - if it is unable to meet even the instinctive understanding of angry Corbyn-supporting Labour members without patronising and demobilising them - then who will? We expect that more than a few will have a positive appreciation of Lev Davidovich Bronstein.

Who will provide you a model motion to get rid of your traitor MP, and pack them off to their panic room? The Trots. Who will call for militant countermeasures against any further coup attempts by the right - the occupation of party premises whose fate lies before some judge, for example? The Trots. (We would like to stress, parenthetically, that local Labour organisations ought to plan for such action starting *now* - the right may well be desperate enough to try something of this kind.)

Who will urge street stalls, picketing, fighting for policy at conference, setting up papers, initiative at the rank and file, rather than damping down enthusiasm wherever possible? Who will dare to suggest that you think further ahead than the next general election, or even the current Labour leader, who *will* need replacing at some time or another? Who will give you permission not to be held hostage by the right, and by extension Rupert Murdoch? The Trots, the Trots, the Trots!

Long may Tom Watson, and his perverse co-conspirators in the Momentum leadership, continue to do us such favours ●

Notes

1. November 16, 2004.
2. <https://www.scribd.com/document/320882857/Far-Left-Entryism-Dossier-Tom-Watson>
3. <http://swp.org.uk/education/main#corbyn>

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