

Cover Sheet

S.B. No. 1 (Plain)

METROPOLITAN POLICE

NOTED
7/3/84

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Special Report

SPECIAL BRANCH

16th day of December 19 83

SUBJECT

Socialist

Workers Party

(SWP)

1. The following information has been received from a secret and reliable source:-

2. "The 1983 National Delegate Conference of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), took place at the Sir William Collins School, Charrington Street, London NW1. The meeting commenced at 10.15am on Saturday 22nd October 1983 and continued on a daily basis until the business was concluded at 2.45pm on Monday 24th October 1983. Some 302 delegates and accredited observers attended.

3. Submitted herewith are publications which formed the basis for discussion prior to conference itself and documents concerning reports, confidential information and 'drafting commissions' in respect of future party policies and perspectives, all of which were issued to delegates on a restricted basis:-

Reference to Papers

400/83/156.....

Publication 1

- Pre-conference discussion material published in 'Socialist Review' (issue No. 57 - September 1983)

Publication 2

- Pre-conference discussion material published in 'Socialist Review' (issue No. 58 - October 1983)

Documents 1 to 5

- Delegate's conference credentials etc.

Document 6

- Conference agenda.

Document 7

- Report on Bradford branch from the branch committee to the Central Commission. (Only issued to delegates and taken back for confidential destruction immediately following the opening session).

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contd....

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- Document 8 - Control Commission report.
- Document 9 - Open letter to SWP members from members expelled from the party.
- Document 10 - Drafting Commission (1) - Revolutionary Strategy and Tactics Today.
- Document 11 - Drafting Commission (2) - The Crisis of Reformism.
- Document 12 - Drafting Commission (3) - The SWP today.
- Document 13 - Amendment to Drafting Commission (3).
- Document 14 - Drafting Commission (4) - Ireland
- Document 15 - Drafting Commission (5) - The SWP and the Industrial Struggle and Intervening in Industry.
- Document 16 - Drafting Commission (6) - Students.
- Document 17-19 - Nominations and final elected membership of the National Committee.

4. As in previous years, the arrangements and format of the conference were dealt with by a presiding Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC), and it was decided by the Central Committee that this function should be fulfilled by the following:-

CONFERENCE ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE

Frank HENDERSON Wolverhampton

Penny HICKS Coventry

Privacy

Lindsey GERMAN Central Committee

5. In addition, the Central Committee nominated the following to be responsible for pre-conference arrangements in respect of administration, internal communications and liaison with relevant outside bodies:-

contd....

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Privacy

Phil COOPER

Mary PHILLIPS

Privacy

6. DRAFTING COMMISSIONS

At the conclusion of each session on the agenda, conference elects a 'drafting commission' comprising five delegates whose purpose is to summarise the main points of discussion/debate in that particular session, in the form of a written document. This procedure is fully explained within the 'standing orders' as outlined on page three of document 6.

7. During this conference drafting commissions were elected following each discussion with the exception of the session on 'Deflected Permanent Revolution - the crisis in the third world'. In that instance conference moved that the Party perspective on this topic was amply set out in Tony CLIFF's recent publication - 'Permanent Revolution'. Despite not being on the agenda, a drafting commission on 'Student Work' was put to conference. Without exception every commission report, when put to the vote, was unanimously carried. There was only the one amendment, again unanimously carried, to the drafting commission report on 'The SWP Today'. The commissions' reports are included in documents 10-16.

8. It is worth mentioning at this point that the general consensus of opinion was that conference appeared an extremely united affair, with no conflict of views emerging on any subject. This was due in part to it being well orchestrated, strongly influenced and conducted by the Central Committee, albeit behind the scenes, and was epitomised by the fact that the drafting commission report on Ireland was written two days before the start of conference.

9. The proceedings were chaired throughout by Paul HOLBORROW, a member of the Central Committee, who used his influence from the chair in selecting 'appropriate' speakers from the constant stream of 'speakers slips' handed to him from the floor. Without exception, all sessions on the agenda were introduced by members of the Central Committee and inevitably at least one Central Committee member was elected to every drafting commission. Another example of backstage manipulation manifested itself on the issue of the election of candidates to the National Committee and this is dealt with later in this report.

10. The SWP, in the foreseeable future, will attempt to consolidate itself, using its branches to build a strong political base in order to emerge from a period of savage 'downturn' as the only credible revolutionary party. The party realises that it is counter-productive to its eventual aim of revolution to campaign on behalf of oppressed groups and to act in tandem, on a united front basis, with other left wing groups and activists. Such groups are seen to be moving to the 'right', using the Labour Party, Trades Union bureaucrats, the broad left and defunctive campaign issues as vehicles in their desperate attempts to achieve credibility and appeal.

11. The SWP membership, through Central Committee proselytism from 'campaign fever', is now realistic enough to accept that recruitment during the present period will be both slow and arduous. It is recognised that past experience of recruiting membership around specific campaign issues failed in the long term to sustain the interest of those recruited and consequently membership drifted away.

12. The Party is aware that 71% of industrial disputes are instigated and organised by shop steward militants within their own work places, compared with 20% by full time union officials and only 9% by influence from outside agitation. The SWP's main perspective is to increase its influence within workplaces and colleges by building its 'shop steward' membership, with the eventual intention of escalating industrial intervention. Through this intervention, the Party believes, recruitment, if only of one or two members at a time, will result.

13. The SWP Today - Document 12

This session was introduced by Pete CLARK, National Secretary, whose account is well reflected in document 12. In addition he claimed that the party's membership is still about 4,000, but explained that it was impossible to give a precise figure due to 'various factors'. The SWP is not a bureaucratic organisation and this is reflected in its administrative capabilities. Registration is carried out on an annual basis and there are many members who have yet to register this year. Although registration is meant to take place during January, registration forms are still trickling into National Office. (Many of these go astray due to inefficient processing). CLARK conceded that membership could be as low as 3,400 or possibly even higher than 4,000, but he was confident that any small drop in the SWP membership was insignificant when compared to the numerical decline of the Communist Party, from 80,000 after the war to an estimated 6,000 subscription paying members at present.

14. CLARK stated that the national membership falls roughly into the following categories:-

Manual Workers 30%
White Collar Workers 10%
Students 20%
Unemployed 40%

There are approximately 750 shop stewards within the party.

15. The financial situation of the party was reported to be satisfactory and the weekly sales figures of the Party organ, 'Socialist Worker' was quoted as being between 15,000 and 16,000. Branch Secretaries have reported that attendance at weekly branch meetings were up on last year and that, generally, membership has remained fairly static. Over 2,000 persons attended Marxism 1983 and the rally at Skegness was the largest ever with 1,438 persons present.

16. CLARK's assessment of a membership figure of 3,400 is probably excessive and, within the confines of the Central Committee, the figure of 3,000 has been noted. Appendix 'H' lists the membership based on registration forms received from branches at National Office from January 1983 to date. As will be seen the total stands at 2299. Bearing in mind that with one branch list not being available and, with returns from Brixton (now Lambeth and Croydon) and Willesden/Harlesden branches incomplete, a number of members have failed to formally register (especially full-time party workers, national staff, Central Committee, branch party 'hacks'), the true figure is probably in the region of 2,400. This is the time of the year when it is most accurate in gauging the true figure of the membership. The London membership now stands at approximately 700. A breakdown is given on Appendix 'G'.

17. The membership list is produced under individual branch headings in order to give some idea of geographical dispersion, but it should be understood that since January 1983, several branches have merged, and in some cases branch names have been changed and new branches have been formed. For reference purposes a more up to date list of branches is produced in Appendix W to the 1983 conference delegate list.

18. Discussion on revolutionary strategy and tactics today, the crisis of reformism, the SWP and the industrial struggle, intervening in industry, deflected permanent revolution and Ireland is adequately summarised in the relevant drafting commission reports (documents 10-16), and in the pre-conference literature (publications 1 and 2).

DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM AND LEADERSHIP IN THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY - introduced by Lindsey GERMAN, Central Committee member.

19. The SWP being a revolutionary democratic centralist organisation has a full time leadership, spearheaded by the Central Committee(CC). The CC's main function is to engage in argument and reason with branch committees, democratic centralism being 90% political motivation and 10% discipline. Its secondary role is to organise the party in the most effective manner, bearing in mind the prevailing political climate, in order to practise intervention and to ensure maximum unity within the party. The CC sees itself as being in advance of the party rank and file membership and to be more accountable than any other section. It is especially there to prevent the party being dragged into the 'political swamp', such as practising 'entryism' to the Labour Party and other political bodies.

20. A list of eight persons, nominated by the outgoing Central Committee, was put to conference by Paul HOLBORROW and their election to the CC was unanimous with no debate. This list is given at Appendix 'D'. Paul HOLBORROW and John DEASON declined to stand for re-election. Both DEASON and HOLBORROW have had a particularly busy time over the last year; HOLBORROW in his role as London organiser and DEASON as industrial organiser and organiser for Wales and Southern England. Both have been members of CC for some years and voiced their wish to have a break from full-time party work and endeavour to gain employment outside the confines of the party.

21. The candidates for the Central Control Commission, a body which deals exclusively with internal party discipline and security matters, were selected by the Central Committee as they all possess a 'hard line' attitude to 'class politics' and an aversion to the evils of 'sectionalism', as experienced by the outgoing CCC over the Bradford branch expulsions. The nominations were again unanimously carried by conference when put to the vote, and the elected body is included in Appendix 'E'.

22. On 27.7.83, 6 members of the Bradford branch were expelled, viz:-

Privacy

This incident has been the main topic of conversation within the party for the last few months and the Central Committee has gone to great lengths in order to clarify the situation and dispel any unnecessary rumours. It has been the subject of much correspondence, details being circulated amongst delegates at conference, and the text is attached to this report in documents 7 and 8.

23. Four of the expelled members from Bradford including **Privacy**, arrived outside conference on the Saturday morning in order to distribute an open letter to delegates in which they expressed their feelings towards the Central Commission and the Central Control Commission. This letter is attached as document 9.

24. A national committee meeting was convened in London at Holborn Library during September 1983 at which the delegates voted to keep the membership of the National Committee at 80. In addition Pete CLARKE, as a result of a decision made by the Central Committee, put to the meeting that a nominating commission for the future National Committee should be elected prior to conference in order to give the outgoing Committee adequate opportunity to assess new nominations.

25. The names for the proposed nominating commission had been discussed by the Central Committee well in advance and were selected to ensure that the final composition of the National Committee would not contain any individual with 'sectionalist views' likely to divert the activities of the membership from the course delineated by the Central Committee. With CLARK himself on the nominating commission, the Central Committee could guarantee having a firm grip on the selection process leading up to an including conference, by way of 'vetting' prospective candidates for the National Committee.

26. The suggested names were unanimously accepted, and the nominating commission comprises the following persons:-

Sheila McGREGOR Birmingham

Roger COX London

Privacy

Pete CLARK Central Committee

27. Consequently, a carefully selected list of candidates, (National Committee preliminary recommended list - document 17) was handed to delegates on the Saturday morning and the nominating commission was available throughout Saturday and Sunday to hear representations from delegates on changes in

the preliminary list. The majority of this representation took place on a private appointment basis during Saturday and Sunday evenings in the Committee room at the Cock public house, Phoenix Road, NW1, at which the nominating committee presided. They were extremely unyielding on delegates proposing suggested changes and the final recommended list (3), when put to the vote at conference during Monday morning's session, only differed marginally from the original list. The final list was unanimously approved and is the subject of document 19 and Appendix 'F'. Those persons shown as 'nominated' on document 19 were unsuccessful in their applications.

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[REDACTED]
N.D. Short

CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT

APPENDIX 'B'

To Special Branch report dated 16.12.83 concerning the
SWP National Delegate Conference

Date: 15/3/84 **3** FULL TIME WORKERS AND ACCREDITED OBSERVERS

Pete ALEXANDER RF 402-Privacy

Alan BOND RF 402/82/203

Privacy

Pete CLARK RF 402-Privacy

Tony CLIFF RF 408-56-38

Alex CALLINICOS RF 402/

John DEASON RF 405-

Ralph DARLINGTON RF 402-Privacy

Lindsey GERMAN RF 402-

Lindsey GREIG RF 402/

Privacy

Pete GOODWIN RF 402

Privacy

Simon HESTER RF 402

Duncan HALLAS RF 402-68-863

Paul HOLBORROW RF 405-Privacy

Chris HARMAN RF 405-63-6

Sheila MCGREGOR RF 402-Privacy

Privacy

John REES Mentions

Privacy

Mentions

Pat STACK RF 402-Privacy

Privacy

Privacy

No trace

Dave SHERRY RF 402

Andy STROUTHOUS RF 402-Privacy

Mike SIMONS RF 402

[REDACTED]

'B' Contd.

Andy ZEBROWSKI ✓

RF 402-

Privacy

Steve WRIGHT ✓

RF 402-

Julie WATERSON ✓

RF 402/83/112

Privacy

Phil COOPER ✓

RF 402-80-380

Mary PHILLIPS ✓

RF 402-

Privacy

Privacy

Mike BARTON ✓

RF 402/

Privacy

Privacy

Frank HENDERSON ✓

RF 402-81-109

Privacy

Jack ROBERTSON ✓

RF 402-

Privacy

Penny HICKS ✓

Mentions

Privacy

Mentions

Privacy

Roger COX ✓

RF 402-

Privacy

Privacy

Harriet SHERWOOD ✓

RF 402/

Privacy

Paul FOOT ✓

RF 405-64-395

Privacy

Chanie ROSENBERG ✓

RF 408-

Privacy

Privacy

[REDACTED]