

Britain - Labour Party: Defend socialists against expulsion

Saturday 24 July 2021, by [STOWE Andy](#) (Date first published: 20 July 2021).

Facing disastrous poll ratings, Keir Starmer is looking to the Neil Kinnock playbook and blaming the left, writes Andy Stowe.

There are a number of organisations seeking to influence Labour Party opinion from within. On the left, among others, you have Tribune and Labour Briefing. Progress on the right is very tightly organised and politically coherent, though their Blairism is bereft of any use in the present day. Working families throughout the land rejoiced at the news that Stephen Kinnock also got in on the game, setting up Renaissance “to re-connect with the communities and working families whose trust and support it has lost....”

In a party with a membership of hundreds of thousands it is perfectly reasonable for groups of people who broadly agree with each other to collaborate to enrich their ideas. So, if Kinnock wants to develop a platform for white people who support Brexit, which is what “working families” means in this context, fair enough. We don’t agree with him but won’t complain about his right to have employees and raise money to produce his manifesto.

As part of the Starmer leadership’s bid to make itself acceptable to Laura Kuenssberg and the right-wing press, it not only intends to continue to deprive Jeremy Corbyn of the Labour whip but has declared its intention to start driving socialists out of the party in a more organised purge. Among its proxies for Corbyn supporters are Socialist Appeal, a group numbering in the low hundreds which believes itself to contain the only real Marxists in Britain.

The inevitable “Labour source” has told the Mirror that Starmer wants Socialist Appeal supporters – along with activists in Chris Williamson’s Resist, Labour Against the Witchhunt, and Labour In Exile – expelled from the party. The organisations themselves will be proscribed so support for them – including writing for them – will be sufficient to prevent or end membership of Labour. Resist, LATW and Labour in Exile are all accused of antisemitism but Socialist Appeal is accused of advocating communism.

Socialist Appeal is affiliated to the International Marxist Tendency, the only real Marxists on the planet they say. This is not to be confused with the International Revolutionary Marxist Tendency which had a British group and magazine called Socialist Alternatives [1]. It was edited by a young extremist who subsequently became Director of Public Prosecutions, got a knighthood and then became Labour leader. And no it wasn’t Corbyn. Only change is constant, as Marxists like to say. Either that or it is part of a cunning plan to get revenge on the Militant, the group from which Socialist Appeal emerged and which was big in Starmer’s Trotskyist days.

Socialist Appeal is the only current on the far left in the Labour Party to have recruited large (by the standards of the far left) numbers of young, new members. No doubt this has made it a target.

Socialist Appeal's version of Marxism may be a little dogmatic for some tastes, but there is absolutely no denying that its members are fully committed to the election of a Labour government and that they engage in a constructive way in the life of the party, with many active in other areas of class struggle. Unlike many of their critics who spent every waking moment of the Corbyn leadership trying to destroy the party electorally, members of Socialist Appeal are strategically focussed in their efforts to get a Labour government.

A charge against the group is that it is "openly communist". That's a way of trying to associate it with mass murderers like Stalin. The truth is that Socialist Appeal's roots lie in that anti-bureaucratic Marxist tradition which Stalin tried to strangle at birth. An approximate analogy would be holding the Christian Socialist Movement [2] which is active in Labour responsible for the Crusades and priests in the Church who rape children. In virtually every Constituency Labour Party the right is making a determined push to defeat, marginalise and smash the left. The tactics are frequently ugly and bureaucratic, a result of lack of political confidence in their ideas. You don't have to agree with very much of what Socialist Appeal or any of the other groups threatened with expulsion say to understand that this is a symbolic purge. It is only a way of signalling to anti-Labour press owners that this is a leadership they can do business with. It is a direct attack on socialist ideas and democratic debate in the party which must be absolutely rejected by every party member who believes in the free exchange of ideas among Labour supporters.

Andy Stowe

P.S.

- Anti*capitalistresistance. 20 Jul 2021:
<https://anticapitalistresistance.org/labour-defend-socialists-against-expulsion/>

Footnotes

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Revolutionary_Marxist_Tendency

[2] <https://www.christiansontheleft.org.uk/latest/csm50th>