

Deputy Leader who were previously elected by the PLP. The latter is therefore now without direct representation for the first time, on a body which has increasingly challenged its claim to partnership under Clause 5. The Constituency Section has no constituency representatives; only those MPs in good odour with the activists. 'Ordinary rank and file members of the Party rarely got within range of the top seven positions' writes the historian of Conference, Lewis Minkin.\* It is still so.

**A** reformed National Executive would have a section for constituency activists, another for women, another for local government – even one for the PLP, released from its paddock at Conference into full participation at last. The trade union 12 ought to be elected by the membership, and not by the barons trading their blocks.

Will there be pressure from below for any of this? Any campaign for Labour Party democracy worthy of the name would have espoused it long ago. If the voting procedures in the Electoral College are strengthened, along the lines I have argued, those thereafter consulted will not be prepared to see their franchise stop at comparatively rare leadership elections. They will want more of the same at Conference. The days when, in Minkin's phrase, 'another pen missed its mark', and a million votes were miscast (or not cast) would be numbered.

I have argued that NEC reform offers something to all three sections who now participate in the Electoral College, as well as providing both risk and opportunity for both the Left and the Right in the party. The same goes for internal democracy in the PLP itself.

There is really no argument worth the name against the PLP electing its parliamentary committee and officers in government as well as in opposition. Once that is done the claim to real consultation by elected PLP representatives in the election manifesto drawn up under Clause 5 can be seen to be enforced.

Tony Benn may continue talking of

'winning the PLP for socialism', with the innocent satisfaction of a missionary departing to convert the pagans of Papua. But a reformed PLP would be better able to challenge such ill-stated populism.

There is no way of avoiding the necessary pain of policy making, of squaring what wins applause at Conference and what carries conviction to the electorate. You can take councillors off the panel in dozens, de-select MPs by the score, but you cannot alter that. If the party's policy on inflation is unconvincing, or its statement on how we are supposed to negotiate a new relationship with the EEC is a gloss varnished onto an illusion, no amount of loyalty oaths and incantations will alter that.

These arguments still go on in that broad mass party which still survives, just as those about devolution and defence did under the last government. The old Right was often terrified of the real rank-and-file at this level; too often the Left now seems to think it is engaged in a game which only activists can play.

When party democracy becomes less of a tactic and more of a principle, when we leave the world of the structural *coup* and the model resolution for real debate in a mass party, then Labour's policy arguments, like its personality arguments, will move beyond self-selecting cliques. It looks as though the Tribune Left is now inoculated against our contemporary bout of Bonapartism, and prepared to argue for a broader, more generous party than anything dreamed of in Arthur Scargill's philosophy.

The danger is that the Solidarity Campaign, brought together to fight against insurrectionist fantasies of a vanguard party, will now retreat gratefully behind the status quo. It too has a stake in reform, and genuine party democracy which accepts the legitimate role of all sections of the party's internal coalition. The alternative to reform, for Left and Right alike, is not ideological purity but a different kind of coalition politics, in which a minority Labour Party is occasionally admitted to cautious cohabitation with the parties of easy virtue. □

## SECURITY

# Other side of the Mountie

Britain's M15 is one of five security services, closely linked together, organised along similar lines and employing like methods. The other four, in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, have undergone investigations in the past decade; all have uncovered serious malpractices. DUNCAN CAMPBELL reports on the latest of these, which suggests an urgent need to investigate M15, now the sole agency to escape public scrutiny.

THE SECURITY SERVICE of the 'Mounties', Canada's equivalent of M15, is to be disbanded as a result of a four-year Royal Commission of Enquiry, which uncovered malpractices 'far beyond the proper function of a security intelligence agency'. The Commission, led by Judge David McDonald, has recommended that those involved be considered for prosecution. A new Security Intelligence Agency is to be set up in its place, headed by a lawyer and independent of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

The picture that emerges from the Royal Commission's report contrasts sharply with the traditional image of the red-uniformed, behatted cavalry of Ottawa tourist postcards. The SS (normal abbreviation) started out in 1950 as an intelligence section of the RCMP's criminal department and increased its size 50-fold in the next 20 years. Its surveillance programme burgeoned during the 1960s and 1970s, to take in anti-war opposition, the New Left, separatist groups, environmentalists, homosexuals and, indeed, any form of 'extra-parliamentary opposition'.

In Operations 'ODDBALL' and 'CHECKMATE', the SS set out to disrupt, destabilise, harass and upset political organisations it had under surveillance. Had it kept within the law, it could have done nothing to restrain opposition groups that were not themselves acting illegally, except to report their activities and ensure that their members did not join the government service. Nevertheless, the SS contrived 'vigorous . . . disruptive tactics', which included:

Making use of sophisticated and well researched plans built around existing situations such as power struggles, love affairs, fraudulent use of funds, information on drug abuse, etc. to cause dissention and splintering of the separatist/terrorists groups . . .

On more than one occasion, government agents have tried to secure the sacking of

\* *The Labour Party Conference* by Lewis Minkin, Manchester University Press, 1980, £6.

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certain individuals, and have spread stories both true and false, in the media to discredit them. They have also spread false information, including anonymous letters and threatening phone calls among members of groups to discredit their leaders. On one occasion, the RCMP agents burned down a barn where a Quebec separatist group was due to meet, so they would move to a new site which would be easier to bug. The Commission noted that such methods were 'a grave mistake' which 'violated the role of law'.

The most notorious of the SS's activities was a series of break-ins to the Agence de Presse Libre du Quebec and two other Montreal offices of Quebec separatist groups. (This was Canada's equivalent of the original Watergate break-in.) The SS agents stole from the offices large quantities of documents, which were never returned and were eventually destroyed. The organisations concerned protested to the government within days, but received no reply. A junior provincial minister announced that the RCMP had not been involved, but omitted to ask the RCMP whether this was the case.

The Commissioner in charge of the SS and its Director-General concealed their knowledge of the operations from the government until 1976, when one of the constables involved in the theft was arrested for a bombing incident and revealed the true story of 'Operation BRICOLE' (as the break-ins were called). The RCMP prepared an impassioned statement admitting the Montreal break-ins but assuring parliament that these incidents had been 'isolated' and an 'aberration'. However, the statement had to be withdrawn within a few months, as news of other incidents began to trickle out.

The separatist Parti Quebecois was a major target of the SS during the party's rise to power in the early 1970s. Informers were planted within the PQ, who continued to

operate after the party was elected to govern Quebec in 1976.

Prior to this, under the codename 'Operation HAM', SS agents had made several secret break-ins to commercial offices to get information about the PQ. In particular, they stole computer tapes listing the party's members, and subsequently broke in again to replace them. The SS's Director General authorised all the activities without talking to government ministers or to the RCMP Commissioner. He told the McDonald Commission:

to have involved Ministers or to have involved persons outside the Security Service in the decisions about Operation HAM... would not have been a proper thing to do...

The McDonald Commission found that senior SS officers regarded laws that got in their way — such as those against traffic offences, breaking and entering to plant bugs or look for papers, and tampering with mail — as 'minor' or 'regulatory' laws which did not or should not apply to them. With considerable difficulty, the Commission probed whether government ministers, including Pierre Trudeau, had been aware of the law-breaking activities of the Mounties. The Mounties claimed that the government had been told quite explicitly that, for the sake of security and intelligence, they 'had been doing illegal things for twenty years but [were] never caught'. Bureaucratic mechanisms for evading responsibilities had been operated to the full. On one occasion, for example, when the legality of tampering with mail was raised (a long-standing business codenamed 'Operation CATHEDRAL'), a self-protective memor-

andum was filed noting that the practice was 'contrary to existing regulations'; no-one suggested it should stop.

THE CANADIAN government's inquiry and decision to disband the Security Service of the Mounties should have had more impact in Britain. Although the four volumes and 1,900 pages of McDonald's report are unwieldy, they are also chilling, detailed and highly applicable. The security services of Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are closely bound together by a series of secret co-operative agreements. Techniques, methods and security intelligence are widely exchanged, principally by means of high-ranking liaison officers attached to each capital. Our man from MI5 is in the High Commission, Ottawa; theirs from the SS is in the Canadian High Commission office in Grosvenor Square.

The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation AS10, the Canadian SS, and New Zealand's SIS were all set up as a direct result of MI5's initiatives in the early cold-war period. In the United States, the same job is done by the FBI.

Each of these security organisations has now been the subject of a judicial or other public inquiry. Each inquiry has produced a catalogue of wrongdoing and unaccountability, and indeed encountered entrenched resistance to democratic supervision. However, in spite of allegations of illegal burglaries, unauthorised mail opening, tapping and similar behaviour, no such public examination has been made of Britain's MI5. □



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