

## Who is a threat to State secrecy?

A COPY of the PV (Positive Vetting) form which is used to check people in sensitive security positions, has been obtained by the *New Statesman*. Although the questionnaire goes into some detail about possible links with Communist states, it asks for less information about personal background and interests than many recruitment questionnaires.

The questionnaire is in four parts, but only two nearly identical parts have to be filled in. Questions on political affiliations start by asking 'have you ever been a member of the Communist Party in the UK'. The same is asked about Fascist organisations; a footnote suggests that 'the word "Communist" embraces "Trotskyists" for the purpose of this document. An affirmative answer will not necessarily disqualify you from employment'. It explains that the questions must be answered because a PV check will lead to a job which 'will put you in touch with information of outstanding security importance'.

Candidates for vetting have to provide at least two character referees, who are then approached by Investigating Officers, employed variously by the Ministry of Defence, Foreign Office, or MI5. Such officers are usually recruited from among middle-aged or retired service or police officers. One former security official describes them generically as 'retired majors with emotional problems'. Investigating Officers will ask referees more searching questions, including those about candidates' sexual orientation and (Scottish or Welsh) nationalist sympathies, if appropriate.

Spouses or fiancées are also investigated, as are the candidate's father and mother. But the PV form itself does not ask for details of girlfriends, boyfriends or one's sex life, unless marriage is intended.

Because of the huge volume of PV checks automatically made by government departments — a practice criticised by Lord Bridge in his report on the Queen's former bodyguard, Commander Trestrail — PV 'clearances' often take two or three months to complete, considerably holding up recruitment or the filling of vacancies. A more frequent, lesser check, 'Normal Vetting' (NV), according to notes circulated to civil service Departmental Establishment Officers, involves

a check with the Criminal Record Office to see if the person is or has been a member of a subversive organisation or has subversive associations. NV is carried out in a blanket way . . .

But an NV check is said to be 'inadequate to spot those whose personal, political or other convictions lead them to disclose classified or protected information to further some cause . . .'. The notes, themselves 'classified', also reveal that the PV system is the responsibility of the 'Personnel Security Committee' in the Cabinet Office. That committee's latest assessment of the threat to British State secrets was a 1970 report by a special group led by Lord Helsby, a former head of the civil service. The Helsby Committee on Protective Security reported, in the wake of the 1960s development of the New Left, that

## Labour group will register

JIM MORTIMER, the Labour party's general secretary, may be having trouble making his register acceptable to the courts, but he is faring better with some members of the constituency Left.

The executive of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy voted by 2-1 to recommend registration to its AGM next January. The CLPD is currently holding a ballot of its members on this issue, although the result will not be binding on the AGM.

A founder-member of the CLPD, Victor Schonfield, has made it clear he thinks senior officers will leave CLPD if the vote goes against registering. He writes in one of the six statements that went out with the ballot papers: 'The principled solution if you find yourself fundamentally opposed to a particular political group is to leave it. Unfortunately many of the CLPD's undeclared opponents [those who oppose registration] have not chosen the principled course. If they carry the day at the AGM, however, a number of us intend to do so.'

One straw in the wind for the CLPD vote is that the annual meeting of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, held in Newcastle, decided to apply for the register (although they are refusing to give the National Executive their membership lists). The motion was passed by a 3-1 majority.

## MENT PROPERTY AND WILL BE TREATED . . .

- (c) Have you ever had any connection with a Communist Party anywhere?
- (d) Have you ever had any connection with any organization associated with a Communist Party or in sympathy with its aims?
- (e) Have you ever been a close associate of a person who to your knowledge is, or has been, a Communist or Communist sympathizer?
- Have you ever been a member of a Fascist organization in the U.K. or elsewhere?

FATHER  
(see Notes below)

MOTHER  
(see Notes below)

### NOTES ON COMPLETION OF THIS PAGE

1. If you will shortly marry, or re-marry, enter the corresponding details of your intended spouse, amending heading "SPOUSE" to "FIANC(E)". Also enter details of any former spouse(s).
2. If you were brought up by a step-parent(s), guardian, parent by adoption or anyone acting as a parent, enter the corresponding details of the person(s) concerned, indicating the relationship.
3. If any of the persons whose details you are required to enter in the columns headed "SPOUSE", "FATHER" or "MOTHER" is dead include the date of death and permanent address at that time.
4. Addresses of units at which you have served as a member of H.M. Forces are not required in Section 2.

The Communist Party has a fundamental interest in subverting the state . . .

But:

Individual Trotskyists, Maoists, anarchists might use protected information in such a way that would further their

political aims or give such information publicity if they thought it would embarrass or damage the reputation of the Government.

'Fascists', it concluded, 'may present a more minor danger'.

Duncan Campbell

The meeting also urged constituencies not to expel members at the behest of the NEC. Probably more significant, however, was the LCC's apparent eagerness to seek party unity, if one can judge by the elections for the LCC's executive. Fifty per cent of the LCC's 700 members voted in what is one of the few measures of Left-wing opinion in the constituencies. Articulate advocates of non-registration, such as Jon Lansman and Anne Ceseck, were voted off the 20-strong executive. Others, such as Audrey Wise, had their votes cut. Most of the candidates who failed to be elected were the strongest opponents of registration.

Patrick Wintour

## Revolt on TUC ban on People's March

THE TUC leadership and Labour's new Right-wing NEC are facing an embarrassing revolt over a TUC ban on union support for participation in a new jobs protest on the lines of last year's Liverpool/London People's March for Jobs.

The ban was agreed last week following pressure from Labour's leadership who feared that organising such an event would weaken election work for Labour in the event of an early general election next year. However, last weekend the TUC's decision received two blows. Firstly, the executive of the fourth biggest union, NALGO

(which is not affiliated to Labour), voted to back the march. Secondly, a meeting of the North West TUC's recalled People's Convention for Jobs and Peace, which represents largely rank-and-file opinion and many of whose delegates participated in last year's People's March, angrily demanded that the unemployed be given 'the right to march'.

They made it clear that they will not be impressed by any suggestions that campaigning on jobs be restricted to seminars and press conferences on Labour's alternative strategy. At the convention they drew up plans for a series of mass campaigning activities on unemployment to ensure that jobs are a key election issue in the region. These include plans for a week of action on unemployment in the spring which would include large festivals in Liverpool and Manchester.

They also called for the setting up of broadly-based 'Towns' Committees' capable of involving not just unions but community groups, ethnic organisations, women's groups, tenants and churches in the fight against unemployment.

Commenting on the convention, Colin Barnett, secretary of the North West TUC, accused 'the bureaucrats at Congress House' of being afraid 'to make common cause with the unemployed'. He warned that 'unless unemployment is made a dramatic issue in election year many voters may not bother to turn out and vote'.

Ken Ferguson