

LOCAL LABOUR PARTIES IN MANCHESTER AND SALFORD AND THE COMMUNIST QUESTION IN THE 1920s

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Neil Kinnock's crusade against Militant in recent years raises interesting comparisons with an earlier period in the Labour Party's history. In the 1920s the Labour leader Ramsay MacDonald, and most of his colleagues, made equally vigorous attempts to prevent members of the newly formed Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) from playing any role in the Labour Party's affairs. Labour's leadership was renowned for its moderation in the 1920s, committed, as it was, to a gradual parliamentary reformism and generally desperate to seek the trappings of respectability. Less, though, is known of Labour's rank and file in this period. Clearly, a crucial indicator of the political attitudes of local Labour parties was their relationship with the Communist Party. This article considers the relationship between members of the two parties in Manchester and Salford.

Regional studies of Labour politics in the inter-war years have tended to focus on those areas where left-wing local Labour parties welcomed Communists with open arms.¹ This concentration is understandable. One can imagine that future historians interested in examining Militant's impact in the 1980s will look closely at local Labour politics in Liverpool. These studies, however, paint a misleading picture. Just as no one would claim that the strength of Militant in the Labour Party on Merseyside is in any way typical of other major areas it would be equally inaccurate to suggest that Communists in the earlier period participated to any great extent in anything more than a small number of local Labour party organisations. Yet precisely because of the paucity of studies this is the impression that is often given. It is argued in this article that the relationship between the Labour Party and Communists in Manchester and Salford was far more typical. In these two cities, Communists were ruthlessly dealt with when they looked like having any significant impact within the Labour Party. At no stage did the party's national officials have to intervene to enforce the requirement that Communists be expelled.

The National Dimension

The Communist Party of Great Britain was formed at a National Convention held on 31 July and 1 August 1920. The newly formed party immediately sought affiliation to the Labour Party, a move that was strongly supported by Lenin and the Bolsheviks in Moscow. On the surface there seemed little reason why the Communist Party could not have affiliated to the Labour Party as a socialist society on the same terms as the Fabian Society and the Independent Labour Party (ILP). The Labour leadership, however, regarded the CPGB as ideologically incompatible with Labour. The CPGB's beliefs were set out by Arthur McManus and Albert Inkpin, the chairman and secretary of the CPGB respectively, in the following way:

... the C.P. repudiates the reformist view that a Social Revolution can be achieved by the ordinary methods of Parliamentary Democracy, but regards

Parliamentary and electoral action generally as providing a means of propaganda and agitation towards the revolution.²

This was, according to Labour's ruling National Executive Committee (NEC), inconsistent with Labour's creed of '...the achievement of the political, social and economic emancipation of the people by means of Parliamentary Democracy'.³

The Labour leadership's stand against Communist affiliation was endorsed by 4,115,000 votes to 224,000 at the 1921 Labour Party Conference.⁴ In the succeeding three years Conference reaffirmed this decision.⁵ In September 1924 the NEC sent a letter to all affiliated societies justifying this decision. Emphasis was placed upon the ideological differences between the two parties. 'The Labour Party seeks to achieve the Socialist Commonwealth by means of Parliamentary democracy', the letter pointed out, whilst the:

... Communist Party seeks to achieve the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat' by armed revolution. The Labour Party realises that, unlike old Russia, with its autocracy ... this country possesses almost a wholly enfranchised adult population, and a Parliament and system of government that will respond to the direction of the working people, so soon as they express intelligent desire for change through the ballot box.⁶

Despite the fact that Communist affiliation to Labour was denied, members of the CPGB were still entitled to become either individual members of the Labour Party, or delegates to the party locally and nationally through their trade unions. Indeed, there was nothing in the rules to stop Communists from standing as Labour candidates. The Party dealt with this situation in 1924 and 1925. In 1924, a NEC resolution that Communists be barred from standing as Labour candidates was carried at Conference by 2,456,000 votes against 654,000.⁷ The following year at Liverpool the Conference carried resolutions banning Communists as individuals and as delegates from trade unions.⁸

Communist Involvement in Manchester and Salford Labour Parties

It is important to recognise that these Conference decisions did not necessarily reflect the views of local Labour activists since the majority of votes at Conference were in the hands of trade union leaders. Only by examining local party records, therefore, is it possible to ascertain the attitudes of local Labour parties to the Communist question. Our concern is to consider the relationship between members of the two parties in Manchester and Salford.

The 1918 Labour Party Constitution provided for the setting up of a country-wide system of divisional parties. Prior to 1918 it was only possible to join the Labour Party through an affiliated trade union or socialist society. The 1918 Constitution allowed, for the first time, direct

individual membership in addition to affiliated membership. Each local party was to set up a general committee, consisting of affiliated delegates and individual members, which in turn elected an executive committee.

After 1918, new divisional Labour parties were created for each of the ten Manchester and Salford constituencies. In turn these divisional parties elected delegates to a city-wide party organisation. Up to 1920 this organisation covered all of the Labour parties within Manchester and Salford. In 1920, however, two separate organisations — the Manchester Borough Labour Party and the Salford Central Labour Party — were created. What is important to note here is that these city-wide parties had authority over the constituency parties within their jurisdiction. During the 1920s, as we shall see, they had cause to exercise this authority over the Communist question.

Several divisional parties in Manchester were reputed to be well to the left. Rusholme was probably the most notable example. The Rusholme Labour Party's left-wing reputation stems from its adoption, in the general elections of 1923 and 1924, of William Paul, a founder member of the CPGB and editor of the *Communist Review* and, from 1925, the *Sunday Worker*. Before this, the party had adopted left-wingers. In the 1919 by-election, for instance, Robert Dunstan, later to join the CPGB, fought the constituency in the Labour cause.

Despite the adoption of Paul and despite the *Manchester Guardian's* assertion that the Rusholme party was dominated by Communists⁹ it seems likely that we should not exaggerate the influence of Communists. The dominating figure in the party at this time was Will Crick. Although he became the first President of the National Left Wing Committee, a Communist inspired organisation established in 1926 to outflank the disaffiliations of local Labour parties who refused to expel Communists, he was never a member of the CPGB. Rather, his sympathies lay more with the ILP for whom he was Vice-President of the Levenshulme branch in 1924. In addition, Crick himself repudiated the suggestion that the Rusholme Labour Party was dominated by Communists. In a letter to the *Manchester Guardian* in October 1924, he claimed that, of the 30 delegates from the three wards in the division who formed the General Council, only one had recently joined the Communist Party.¹⁰ On the other hand we can treat this claim with some scepticism. At least two Communists, Mary Knight and Dr. M.E. May, were active in the Rusholme party at this time and since these two are the best known they may represent the tip of an iceberg. Indeed, Crick, writing in the Communist Party Newspaper *Workers' Weekly*, referred to the Rusholme party's '...intimate connections with the Communist Party'.¹¹

Of course, many of the individuals mentioned above had been active in the Manchester Labour movement prior to 1918. William Paul, Mary Knight and her husband, for



A.J. Cook (left) with William Paul, Editor of the *Sunday Worker*.

instance, were members of the Socialist Club in Openshaw at the turn of the century. Stella Davies, herself a Labour activist in Manchester before and after the First World War, tells us that Paul was a merchant who supplied goods to stall holders in markets and that the Knights, described as being in the 'Engels tradition', were Paul's business associates. When the CPGB was formed, the majority of the Socialist Club members established a branch. It is interesting to note too that Mary Knight was the mother of Lester Hutchinson, M.P. for Rusholme between 1945-50, who was expelled from the Labour Party in July 1949 for being a 'crypto' Communist.¹²

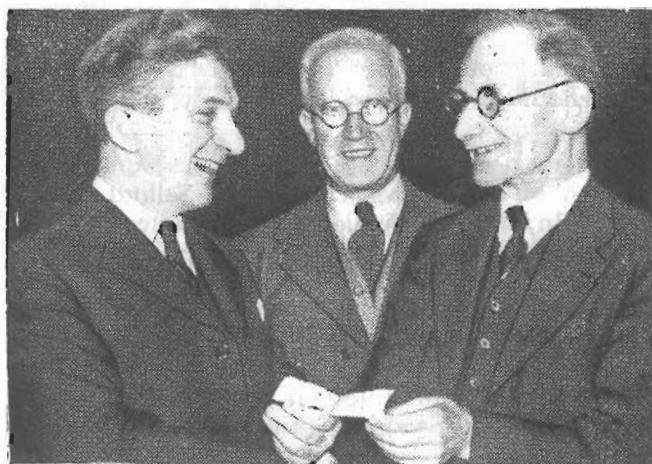
Whatever the composition of the Rusholme Labour Party it demonstrated consistent opposition to the exclusion of Communists. In 1923 Paul was adopted and, because at that time no rule to the contrary existed, this was endorsed by the NEC. In August 1924 Paul was re-adopted as Labour candidate for Rusholme and despite the decision of the national Conference in October to exclude Communists as Labour candidates, the Rusholme party confirmed its choice with only eight people, out of 400 present, voting against.¹³ In 1925 Crick was sent as the Rusholme delegate to the Labour Party Conference where, backing a resolution sent by his local party, he spoke against the exclusion of Communists begging the conference to reverse the 1924 decision.¹⁴

One can glimpse a sympathetic attitude towards Communists in other constituency Labour parties in Manchester and Salford. In Moss Side, for instance, the local party considered adopting John Campbell, who, as acting editor of the *Workers' Weekly*, had very nearly been prosecuted by the Labour Government in 1924 for allowing a subversive article to be published, as their candidate in the same year. After 'lengthy deliberation' the adoption meeting decided, by the narrow margin of 20 votes to 19, to respect the national Conference decision and to seek an official Labour candidate. In Gorton, described by the *Manchester Guardian* as the 'headquarters' of Communism in the city, the Trades and Labour Council elected Communists to be delegates at the Labour Party Conferences of 1922 and 1923 and between 1921-23 a prominent Openshaw Communist, J. Blevins, was elected to the executive committee of the Manchester Borough Labour Party.¹⁵ The election of John Brotherton as delegate to the 1923 Labour Conference caused some trouble for the Gorton party since the NEC, apparently told of the fact by the Miles Platting Labour Party, asked for his withdrawal. Gorton Trades and Labour Council refused and Brotherton was prevented from attending by having his credentials withdrawn.¹⁶

There is evidence too that the Exchange Labour Party in Manchester had not, by 1927, complied with the decisions of Conference and was still allowing Communists to take part in its organisation. A report before the NEC in October of that year stated that the party was '...not in a satisfactory position...'¹⁷ The most militant party in Manchester and Salford in the 1920s was the one in South Salford. Indeed, in 1928 J.W. Kneeshaw, Labour's North West Regional Organiser, reported that the Communist '...elements had obtained a majority and controlled the South Salford Labour Party...'¹⁸

Labour's Ambiguous Response

It is clear that for the majority of Labour delegates, officials and members in Manchester and Salford the fact that some of their colleagues were also members of the



Jack Munro (right) when retiring as secretary of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council.

CPGB did not overtly worry them too much. What does seem evident is that many had divided loyalties between, on the one hand, their desire for a united working-class movement and, on the other, their desire to be loyal to the Labour Party nationally. Thus decisions taken in Manchester and Salford on the Communist issue in the 1920s are shrouded in a good deal of ambiguity.

In Gorton, for example, despite the fact that the local party sent Communist Party members to Labour Party Conferences, it was decided in 1924 by 40 votes to 26 not to endorse the candidature of Communists in either parliamentary or municipal elections.¹⁹ The Manchester Borough Labour Party excluded Communists from individual membership in 1924 and this decision was maintained and implemented.²⁰ The party's attitude to Communist delegates was not so clear. Initially a resolution was carried banning them from delegate meetings. Thus, in January 1925, Jack Munro, the Communist President of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council, was excluded from Labour Party meetings. As a protest, the Trades Council withdrew its five delegates to the Borough party. Two months later, however, the decision to exclude Communist delegates was rescinded by the narrow margin of 58 votes to 56.²¹

In Salford the attitude of the Central Labour Party was even more ambiguous with resolutions being adopted and then not implemented. The local Communist Party were prevented from affiliating by a decision taken in September 1920 to '...act in accord with the request of the National Labour Party...'²² This decision was enforced although in 1923 the delegate elected to the Labour Party Conference was mandated to vote for the resolution supporting Communist Party affiliation.²³ What is surprising is that in the following year, when the issue was to be discussed again at Conference, the delegate was given permission '...to use his own discretion on the matters raised before the Conference'.²⁴ This could be regarded as a change of heart on the part of the Salford party given that the delegate appointed, James Openshaw, was moderate in his opinions and certainly not in favour of Communist affiliation. Whether or not this can be so regarded, it is clear that the Salford party were not willing to engage in any form of joint action with the Communist Party let alone allow it to affiliate. Thus a call by the Pendleton No. 2 branch of the Amalgamated Engineering Union in February 1923 for a joint election committee for the Poor Law Guardian elections, consisting of representatives from the local Unemployed Workers Committee, the Communist Party and the Labour Party was rejected by the executive committee on

the grounds that it would '...contravene the spirit of the new rules of local Labour Parties laid down by the Edinburgh Conference'.²⁵ At the following delegate meeting in March an attempt was made to quash the executive committee's decision but this was defeated.

The decisions described above demonstrate loyalty to the decisions taken at national level even though these may not have been agreed with. In the case of individual Communists and their relationship with the Labour Party in Salford the situation was different. In this area half-hearted attempts to act in accordance with Conference decisions were the norm.

It was not surprising that in the early 1920s many Communists remained within the Labour Party. Most of those who joined the Communist Party were former members of the British Socialist Party (BSP) which was affiliated to the Labour Party. In South Salford a particularly strong branch of the BSP existed and in 1920 it became the nucleus of the Salford Communist Party.²⁶ As a result of the 1920 Conference decision excluding the Communist Party from affiliation, the Salford Central Labour Party decided to ask all Labour candidates for public positions to sign the party constitution. By November 1920, 15 of the 26 involved had signed but despite the sizeable number of omissions, no action was taken. This casual attitude towards the exclusion of Communists is even more surprising given that the Salford Communist Party put up six candidates for the Guardian elections in April the following year. In their election leaflet the ideological incompatibility between the two parties was made clear:

*The boss class (including the Labour Party) are again putting forth great efforts to capture your votes, but we confidently hope that the workers will no longer be put off with palliatives and reform, but will vote solidly for the representatives of the only class that matters, the working-class, the producers of all wealth.*²⁷

Even more extraordinary was the way in which the debate surrounding the issue of Communist office holders in the Salford party was conducted. In January 1926 a letter from Labour Party headquarters pointing out that members of the Communist Party were not entitled to sit on the executive committees of local Labour parties was considered.²⁸ Referred to the next delegate meeting, the issue was 'debated at considerable length' after which it was decided, by 21 votes to 20, that the exclusion of Communists from the executive committee be enforced.²⁹ The minutes record clearly, however, that this decision was actually never implemented. Up to 1926 a number of Communist Party members were regularly elected to the executive committee. For example, Jack Forshaw, a delegate to the seventh Communist Party Congress in 1925, and Thomas Cavanagh, the local Communist Party secretary, were both members in 1922 and the latter remained a member being Vice-President in 1924 and 1925. Even after the decision in 1926 to exclude them, Communists continued to be members. In 1926 Jack Brewin, the treasurer of Salford's Unemployed Workers Committee in the early part of the 1920s, was elected to the executive committee and from 1927-32 was secretary of Crescent Ward Labour Party. Cavanagh stood but was not elected in the same year.³⁰ In the following year Brewin and Cavanagh were again elected as was the latter again in 1929.³¹

Although it is clear then that, at least as far as individual members of the Communist Party were concerned, many Communists were allowed to remain active in some local

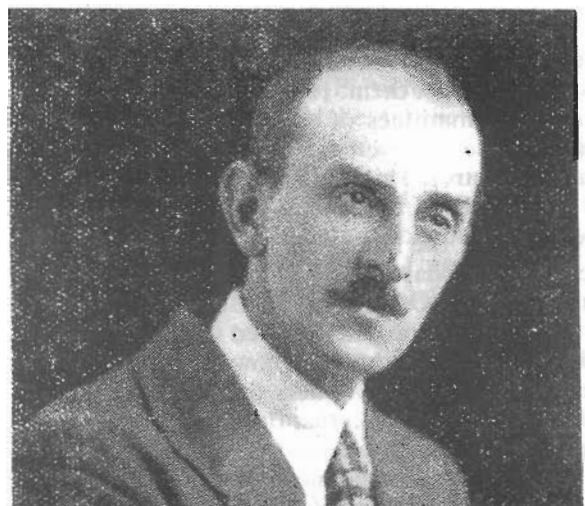
Labour parties in Manchester and Salford this by no means implies that there was a general sympathy with their views. One example of how Communists were perceived by Labour Party activists in Manchester is provided by the papers left by Wright Robinson, a prominent ILP member in Manchester, divisional officer for the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers, Labour Councillor for the Beswick Ward in Manchester between 1919-35 and a future Lord Mayor of Manchester. Of course it is difficult to gauge how representative his views were. It should be noted that he had strong radical credentials. Before the First World War he was editor of the Liverpool *Forward* and an ILP organiser. Further he was a pacifist and during the War avoided imprisonment by taking a job at a Manchester University hall of residence. Perhaps even more significant was the fact that he spoke against the exclusion of Communists at the 1925 Labour Party Conference.

Despite these radical credentials his attitude towards Communists was negative. Commenting on Marxism and Marxists in 1921, for instance, he wrote in his diary that:

*It has always puzzled me why Marx appears to have so much more power to inspire fanaticism than to stimulate thought. It seems comic to see how wholeheartedly some of his followers bolt themselves into the confines of his dogma, and from within jeer at every other gospel but their own.*³²

Remarking on the influence of Communists in his union the following year he noted that the Communist path was '...alien to the Labour Party...' but that '...Communists in the Labour Party are trying to hustle it by fraud, by guile, by lying...' to embark on that path.³³

Much of Robinson's diary for the latter part of 1923 is taken up by his account of Ellen Wilkinson's attempts to be adopted as a Labour candidate and her election campaign in Ashton. Wilkinson, a founder member of the CPGB, Manchester councillor and later Education Minister in Atlee's 1945 Government, was a member of the same union as Robinson. Despite his obvious personal affection for her, he was not at all keen on her politics. In 1923, Wilkinson was nominated, along with Compton and Dennison, to be the Labour candidate for the Gorton seat. Robinson wrote that he was 'afraid she would win'. As it happens she was not adopted and moved to Ashton where she fought the election as a Labour candidate. Robinson played a significant role in her campaign. Here he came across a number of Communists, primarily from Gorton, who were helping in the election. Robinson's attitude towards them is



Will Crick, 1927.

revealing. He remarked:

A more disreputable gang it would be impossible to find in any serious political contest. They were like a gang of freebooters out to rifle the people of Ashton out of their votes.

Robinson also noted the negative attitude of Councillor Davy, the secretary of Gorton Trades and Labour Council, towards Wilkinson. He remarks how Davy did not like the idea of a Communist as M.P. He also, according to Robinson, ridiculed Wilkinson's relationship with John Jagger, a fellow Communist and member of the same union. Was he a 'bit soft' he asked Robinson since Jagger had '...haunted her at her meetings, buying sweets for her, running for tea ... and waiting upon her like a lackey'. Stella Davies recalled, in her autobiography, the Gorton selection meeting which throws further light on the nature of the local party. 'Three candidates', she wrote:

...faced about 100 delegates of which the engineers and steel smelters were the largest numbers. It was soon apparent that there was hostility to Ellen because she was a 'maverick' ... too far to the left to be acceptable ... Ellen was defeated by an overwhelming majority.³⁴

Another revealing insight into the relationship between Labour and Communist activists concerns the case of Jack Forshaw in Salford. Forshaw, as previously mentioned, was a leading member of the Salford Communist Party. After the General Strike a leaflet entitled *A Great Betrayal* was duplicated at Forshaw's house in Salford. He was subsequently arrested, remanded in custody and sentenced to one month's imprisonment. Unfortunately, despite being released on bail, pending an appeal, Forshaw contracted pneumonia and died.³⁵ The fact that there was no love lost between the Labour Party and the Communists is demonstrated by the fact that James Openshaw, secretary of the Salford Labour Party, recalled later that some Communists blamed him for Forshaw's death because they believed that he had been responsible for informing the police that Forshaw was behind the leaflet.³⁶ Openshaw certainly did know about the leaflet since he had earlier, at the behest of some trade union branch members, been responsible for preventing its distribution at Ashfield Labour Club in Salford.³⁷ Whether he was responsible or not is irrelevant in one sense though. The fact that he was accused in the first place tells us how Communists perceived the relationship.

Labour Takes Action

What is clear from the evidence is that when individual constituency parties in Manchester and Salford were perceived to have been taken over by Communists, action was taken against them. Here the party officials and the executive committees of the city-wide parties played a dynamic role intervening in the trouble spots to re-establish control. This occurred in Moss Side, Rusholme and South Salford.

In Moss Side, the Manchester Labour Party intervened when the local party sought to adopt John Campbell as their candidate. Officials of the Borough party attended the adoption meeting and refused to let Campbell speak to the meeting or to let any known Communist speak or vote.³⁸ In Rusholme, when the local party adopted William Paul in 1924, the Borough party refused to support him in the subsequent election campaign. Later in the 1920s the Rusholme Labour Party was bitterly divided into left and right factions with Will Crick as the leader of the latter. In 1927 Crick was selected as Labour

candidate for the division but as the National Labour Party Agent reported that protests from local branches, ward committees and individuals had followed Crick's selection, the NEC ordered that a fresh selection be arranged.³⁹ What happened over the subsequent two years is something of a mystery. No minutes of either the Manchester Borough Labour Party or the Rusholme Labour Party remain and the press reports are sketchy.

It appears that the left retained control of the party until the middle of 1928. In July of that year the left lost its majority on the local party's General Council when the Levenshulme ward committee elected a number of moderate delegates. Representatives from the Longsight ward no longer attended Council meetings because they were dissatisfied with the way in which the left-wing officials were running the party. When the newly elected Levenshulme representatives were prevented from taking part in Council meetings the party was left in the hands of the left dominated Rusholme ward.

At what stage the Borough Labour Party intervened is not clear. It seems likely they were behind the Levenshulme ward elections, encouraging and organising, perhaps, a moderate slate, since the officials of the Rusholme party described them as 'unconstitutional'. The officials of the Borough party also probably organised the attempt on 17 July 1928 to orchestrate the election of new officials in Rusholme. Certainly they refused to acknowledge the authority of the existing left-wing officials. This attempt failed when the left faction occupied the hall and prevented them from holding the meeting.⁴⁰

The local press reported that the Borough party were considering taking 'drastic' action⁴¹ and the NEC, discussing the issue on 25 July, were told that '...difficulties of an acute description existed between the Rusholme divisional Labour Party and the Manchester Borough Labour Party'.⁴² The issue was dealt with by the latter body and was not mentioned again by the NEC. How they dealt with it is not clear but by the general election of 1929 Crick had been removed as the Labour candidate to be replaced by Jerrold Adshead.⁴³ Crick advertised himself as an Independent Labour candidate before withdrawing on nomination day.⁴⁴

The way in which Salford Central Labour Party dealt with Communist influence in the South Salford division provides a clearer example of the dynamic role played by party officials. The incident precipitating action occurred during the May Day demonstrations in 1928 when the Young Labour League were ejected by the police from the procession. The police were ordered to take this action when the President and Secretary of the Central Labour Party took exception to a banner carried by the League which displayed a picture of Lenin under the caption 'Our Guide and Leader'.⁴⁵ The expulsion of the Young Labour League from Salford Labour Party meetings and demonstrations seems to have been a regular occurrence. Two years earlier, for instance, they were removed from the May Day demonstration. In that year the action of James Openshaw in having the League ejected was endorsed at a delegate meeting despite an attempt by Jack Brewin to have the matter referred to the executive committee.⁴⁶

In 1928 this rather trivial event, which was obviously a superficial manifestation of the wider ideological differences which existed between the Labour Party and the Communists in Salford, caused further conflict. After the incident, the South Salford Labour Party narrowly passed a resolution calling for the removal of the officials involved in the ejection of the League.⁴⁷ The executive



Ellen Wilkinson leading the Jarrow Marchers in October 1936.

committee of the Central party subsequently endorsed the officials' actions and this decision was confirmed at the following delegate meeting on June 6 by 29 votes to 17.⁴⁸

By this time J.W. Kneeshaw, Labour's North West Regional Organiser, had become involved. At a special executive committee meeting on June 29 Kneeshaw, according to the minutes, '...stated that the Party in Salford required purging of disloyal elements...' and that the Communists 'were working against and defying the executive committee of the movement'.

At the same meeting the executive committee considered a motion that the 'National Executive Committee of the Party be written to, seeking authority to expel the South Salford Labour Party as at present constituted from affiliation to the Party'.⁴⁹ Before a vote could be taken on this motion the meeting was adjourned but on July 13 'after prolonged consideration' the resolution was carried by 11 votes to 5. On August 1, however, the delegate meeting decided that before any final decision was taken a special committee be set up to investigate the South Salford Labour Party.⁵⁰

The special committee met intermittently for the next five months inviting the ward committees, womens' section and the Young Labour League of South Salford to appear before it and seeking to examine the divisional party's minute books. It appears that these requests were largely refused. Eventually the final report was discussed at a delegate meeting in January 1929. It had three main provisions. First that the executive committee of South

Salford Labour Party should expel all known Communists, second that the party cease to recognise the South Salford League of Youth and third, that Thomas Cavanagh should be removed as secretary. Cavanagh, himself a member of the Communist Party, remained defiant stating:

...that he could not agree that Communist Party members should be excluded, and declined to give an undertaking either on his own behalf or on behalf of the (South Salford) executive committee that the Constitution in this particular would be carried out.

Despite this the report's findings were carried by 22 votes to 17.⁵¹

It was at this point that the officials took charge. The next day the South Salford Labour Party met to consider the report. Before a vote could be taken, however, the meeting was closed at the behest of party officials after they had challenged the right of 'certain non-members' to attend.⁵² According to Cavanagh the meeting continued and '...the recommendations of the committee of enquiry regarding the party were rejected by a big majority'.⁵³

This big majority, it seems, was made up primarily of those 'non-members' referred to by the party officials. It seems clear that they were members of the Salford League of Youth. This assertion is backed up by a prominent member of the party who told the press that the number of Communists in South Salford was insignificant but had been increased by an influx of youth from other parts of the city. The party officials themselves convened a meeting of the South Salford party on the 16

January and members of the League of Youth were refused admittance, police being posted around the building to prevent them finding a way in. Cavanagh was absent from the meeting reportedly with a heavy cold but he was able to express, to a reporter, his opinion that '...the people concerned had no authority to convene it'. The meeting lasted for over three hours amid great uproar but eventually the report was adopted, according to the press by 92 votes to 48 and according to the Salford Labour Party minutes by 90 to 42.⁵⁴

A Representative Case Study?

In Manchester and Salford, Communists throughout the 1920s had limited success in forging alliances with Labour. Communists were, on the whole, allowed to remain within the Labour Party but as soon as they gained a strong foothold within a constituency party the officials

and executive committees of the Manchester Borough and Salford Central Labour parties acted to neutralise their threat. The national Labour Party played little part in these events.

It seems extremely likely that the response of the Labour parties in Manchester and Salford to the Communist question was highly typical. Between 1926-28, the relatively small total of 26 local Labour parties were disaffiliated by the NEC for failing to deal with Communists.⁵⁵ Of course, although these figures are strongly suggestive, they do not prove that opposition to Communist involvement in the Labour Party was the norm. Only further locally based research will confirm whether or not this was the case. It is hoped that this study of Manchester and Salford will be a stimulus for such research.

NOTES

1. See, for instance, S. MacIntyre, *Little Moscows*, (1980) and I. McLean, *The Legend of Ned Clydeside*, (Edinburgh, 1983)
2. *National Executive Committee Minutes* (hereafter NEC) 1 Dec. 1920
3. *NEC*, 4 Jan. 1922
4. *Labour Party Conference Report* (hereafter LPCR) 1921, p.167
5. *LPCR* 1922, p.199; 1923, p.189; 1924, p.131
6. *NEC*, 24 Sep. 1924
7. *LPCR* 1924, p.131
8. *LPCR* 1925, pp.187-89
9. *Manchester Guardian*, 8 Oct. 1924
10. *Manchester Guardian*, 11 Oct. 1924
11. R. and E. Frow, *The Communist Party in Manchester 1920-26* (Manchester n.d.), p.63, 65; *Workers' Weekly*, 12 Sep. 1924
12. C.S. Davies, *North Country Bred*, (1963), pp.117-119
13. *Manchester Guardian*, 20, 30 Nov. 1924; 13 Oct. 1924
14. *Frow*, p.26
15. *Manchester Guardian*, 15 Oct. 1924; 17 May 1929. *Frow*, p.51
16. *Frow*, pp.25-26
17. *NEC*, 26 Oct. 1927
18. *Salford Central Labour Party Minutes* (hereafter Salford Mins.), 29 June 1928
19. *Manchester Guardian*, 15 Oct. 1924
20. *Manchester Borough Labour Party Annual Report*, 1924, p.10. In the possession of Eddie and Ruth Frow at the Working Class Movement Library (hereafter WCML)
21. L. Bather, 'A History of Manchester and Salford Trades Council'. Unpublished Ph.D., Manchester University, 1956, p.192
22. *Salford Mins.*, 17 Sep. 1920
23. *Salford Mins.*, 2 May 1923
24. *Salford Mins.*, 1 Oct. 1924
25. *Salford Mins.*, 7, 16 Feb. 1923
26. See G. C. Goldberg, 'The Socialist and Political Labour Movement in Manchester and Salford 1884-1914'. Unpublished M.A., Manchester University, and D. Morris, 'The Origins of the British Socialist Party', *North West Labour History Society Bulletin*, 8, pp.29-43
27. *Salford Mins.* 3 Nov., 17 Dec. 1920; *Guardian Election Leaflet*, 4 April 1921. WCML
28. *Salford Mins.*, 22 Jan. 1926
29. *Salford Mins.*, 3 Feb. 1926
30. *Salford Mins.*, 14 April 1926
31. *Salford Mins.*, 6 April 1927. Eddie Frow informs me that Cavanagh remained a member of the Communist Party until at least 1930
32. *Diary 10 June 1921*. Wright Robinson Papers (hereafter WRP), Manchester Central Reference Library, M284 Boxes 8-11
33. *Diary 25 June 1922*, WRP, M284, B 8-11
34. *Diary 1 Dec. 1923*, WRP, M284, B 8-11; *Davies*, p.70
35. *Frow*, pp.41-42
36. J. Openshaw, *Memories of the Salford Labour Movement*, p.32. Typescript in Salford Local History Library
37. *Openshaw*, p.32
38. *Manchester Evening News*, 17 Oct. 1924
39. *NEC*, 27 July 1927
40. *Manchester Evening News*, 20 July 1928
41. *Manchester Evening News*, 20 July 1928
42. *NEC*, 25 July 1928
43. *Manchester Guardian*, 20 May 1929
44. *Manchester Guardian*, 23 May 1929
45. *Salford Mins.*, 18 May 1928
46. *Salford Mins.*, 5 May 1926
47. *Salford Mins.*, 18 May 1928
48. *Salford Mins.*, 18 May, 6 June 1928
49. *Salford Mins.*, 29 June 1928
50. *Salford Mins.*, 13 July, 1 Aug. 1928
51. *Salford Mins.*, 9 Jan. 1929
52. *Salford Mins.*, 18 Jan. 1929
53. *Salford City Reporter*, 18 Jan. 1929
54. *Salford City Reporter*, 18 Jan. 1929; *Salford Mins.*, 18 Jan. 1929
55. Calculated from NEC Mins