

An open letter

Socialist Equality Party (UK) demands the Undercover Police Inquiry release the names of all police agents and spies

Socialist Equality Party
10 December 2015

The following letter has been sent to the inquiry into undercover police operations in Britain, being chaired by Lord Justice Pitchford.

The Socialist Equality Party demands the immediate release of the names of all undercover police operatives, especially those active in the Workers Revolutionary Party (and its forerunners and successor organisations), their pseudonyms and dates of operation.

We reject the terms of reference of the inquiry, which was convened only after the names of some undercover operatives were either disclosed by the agents themselves or uncovered by their victims.

Even the small amount of information in the public domain makes clear that, in numerous instances, these undercover officers were involved in and directed criminal activity. These include the state-sanctioned rape of eight female activists, who were deceived into long term relationships and who in some instances had children by male officers sent to spy on them and their co-thinkers. Five such officers have been identified—John Dines, Andrew Boyling, Mark Jenner, Bob Lambert and Mark Kennedy.

Similar cases of deception have resulted in prison sentences of several years. This month the Metropolitan Police were forced to pay millions in compensation to just seven of the women known to have been victims of its undercover agents and was forced to admit to this activity being “abusive, deceitful, manipulative and wrong” and a violation of the women’s human rights. Yet no officer faces prosecution and their real names have not been revealed except in those cases when it has been impossible to conceal this information any longer.

In addition to these crimes, it has been established that

undercover officers stole the names of dead children to provide themselves with fake identities for their covert work, and actively directed and/or took part in illegal activity with the purpose of entrapment through provocation.

Despite this evidence, the stated aim of the inquiry is set out as to “investigate the role and the contribution made by undercover policing *towards the prevention and detection of crime*” [emphasis added]. This can only conceal the true extent of state penetration by limiting any investigation to what is already known.

The designation of a “core participant” in the inquiry relies on the person already being aware that they were spied on by a police agent. So far, “core participant” status, which confers legal assistance, has been given to 213 individuals and organisations, including 18 undercover police officers, and the Metropolitan Police and National Crime Agency which regularly deploy undercover agents.

Given that the inquiry is meant to focus on the 40-year period from 1968, these numbers are in no way commensurate with the real scale of the spying activities undertaken. Much of the initial focus has been on the targeting of environmental and animal rights groups, as well as a number of justice campaigns—especially those involving police killings (such as Jean Charles de Menezes), or police malpractice as in the case of the Stephen Lawrence family and relatives of those who died in the 1989 Hillsborough football stadium disaster. Unions, including the National Union of Mineworkers, the Fire Brigades Union, and the construction union UCATT, have also been targeted and are accepted as core participants. So, too, has the Blacklist Support Group

(BSG), a justice campaign for workers denied employment by construction firms for political activity or trade union militancy, and individuals from the Youth Against Racism in Europe group of the Socialist Party of England and Wales.

Among the organisations already identified, the numbers of those who will have unwittingly fallen under the surveillance activities of undercover agents will run into the thousands. And these represent the activities of only a handful of agents now in the public domain. The actual numbers of those affected by such operations will run into the tens of thousands.

Currently, barely any political organisations feature in the list of witnesses to the inquiry. This is especially peculiar, given that the focus of the inquiry is the Special Demonstration Squad (SDS) which was specifically created as part of high-level political operations against the left. The SDS was established in 1968 under Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson at a time of revolutionary convulsions and rising class struggle in Britain and throughout Europe. It is known to have been provided by the Home Office with a “separate and secret budget” for its operations. It was tasked with collecting information on those considered to “cause problems for the state” and to report back to MI5 and Special Branch.

Information revealed by ex-MI5 agents Peter Wright and David Shayler, among others, indicates that the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) and its predecessor, the Socialist Labour League (SLL), were targets of undercover police operations from the late 1960s onwards—including the presence of at least one “deep throat” operative.

The WRP, which was until 1986 the British section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, had a large following among important sections of the working class and many well-known figures in the artistic community. Hansard records that during a House of Lords debate on February 26, 1975, on the threat of “subversion and extremism,” the Earl of Kimberley stated that it was “by far the most dangerous of the Trotskyist organisations in this country. It is larger, better organised, and, from the point of view of industrial agitation, more intelligently led than its rivals.”

In September 1975, the WRP’s College of Marxist Education in Derbyshire was raided by Special Branch, using the pretext of a defamatory article in the *Observer* newspaper. The *True Spies* documentary, broadcast by the BBC in November 2002, implied that Special Branch was involved in framing up the WRP for the raid using an

undercover agent. “Tom”, listed as a Special Branch Agent, 1977-87, was paid to spy on the WRP on a £500 per month retainer. In the same programme Tony Robinson, who worked in Lancashire Special Branch between 1965 and 1981, lists the number of organisations in which undercover officers were working and their codenames—“agent 735” in the case of the WRP. Whether this is the same agent as “Tom” is unknown.

Whether or not the SDS was directly involved in all or any of these cases, it was only one unit within a vast operation that has taken on various guises over the decades and which is known to have targeted, in addition to the SLL/WRP, the Socialist Workers Party, the Militant Tendency/Socialist Party and many others. These activities continue to this day under the direction of the Confidential Intelligence Unit and the National Domestic Extremism and Disorder Intelligence Unit. According to the agent Mark Kennedy, the information he gathered working undercover during the G8 protests in Scotland in 2005 “was going directly to [then Prime Minister] Tony Blair’s desk.”

Despite this, the inquiry’s terms state that any evidence gathered regarding a potential “miscarriage of justice”, as a result of undercover activities, will be referred to “senior members of the Crown Prosecution Service and the police.” That the state is to be charged with supposedly following up on instances of its own criminality makes clear that, far from dealing with the grave threat to civil liberties posed by these activities, the inquiry will cover them up.

The Socialist Equality Party insists on the immediate release of the details of all undercover operations against the SLL/WRP and call on those with any knowledge of all such activities to make their information public.

The Socialist Equality Party



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact