

Scotland: Victims demand removal of former police spy from St. Andrew's University

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Individuals in groups targeted for undercover police surveillance have written to Dr. Louise Richardson, principal of St. Andrews University, Scotland, demanding the removal of former police provocateur Bob Lambert from his position as a lecturer.

They include *Guardian* writer George Monbiot, who holds an honorary doctorate from St. Andrews, Lois Austin of the Socialist Party's Youth Against Racism in Europe, Dave Smith of the Blacklist Support Group and Helen Steel.

The letter notes Lambert's position at the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence and states, "We believe his past conduct as a central figure in the Metropolitan Police's Special Demonstration Squad (SDS) means he is supremely unsuitable for teaching and shaping the thoughts of others in his current position."

The SDS, formed by the Metropolitan Police's Special Branch, was an adjunct of the secret intelligence service MI5. It was established in 1968 under Labour prime minister Harold Wilson as part of high-level political operations against left-wing organisations.

Monbiot et al. accuse Lambert of human rights abuses, noting that the Metropolitan Police recently issued a public apology to seven women tricked into long-term relationships, some of which resulted in children. The apology says these relationships were "abusive, deceitful, manipulative and wrong" and were "an abuse of police power and caused significant trauma."

Lambert now admits four such relationships while an undercover spy. The letter explains that "he was later the SDS manager who deployed numerous other officers who did the same."

The letter summarises revelations about Lambert's broader role in SDS activities.

- Lambert stole the identity of Mark Robert Charles Robinson, who died aged seven. Deceased identities were used by police spies to acquire Social Security, a passport

and similar records needed to support a fake identity. The internal Operation Herne report found 1,200 instances of dead children applying for passports. Lambert was arrested "four or five times" by his own admission and prosecuted under a false identity.

- He "co-wrote the 'What's Wrong with McDonald's?' leaflet". This leaflet, published by an anarchist group and the Lambert-targeted London Greenpeace group, criticised the McDonald's burger chain and was the subject of a libel from McDonald's. The so-called McLibel trial pitted McDonald's against Helen Steel, one of the letter's signatories, and ex-postal worker Dave Morris. It became the longest running libel trial in British history. No mention of SDS involvement was made at the trial.

- Lambert was in charge of spying on the family of Stephen Lawrence, the south London teenager murdered by a racist gang in 1993. His team oversaw agents tasked with finding "dirt" that could be used against the family. In 1998, he was referred to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) following an attempt to use information gathered at the then public inquiry into the murder. The IPCC investigation into Lambert is said to be ongoing.

- The Lawrence family was just one of "at least 18 similar family and black justice campaigns spied on by the SDS" under Lambert's control. In 2014, it was revealed that among the justice campaigns thought to be targeted were those working on behalf of relatives of Jean Charles de Menezes, Cherry Groce, Harry Stanley, Wayne Douglas and Ricky Reel. In all of these cases, the victims were either killed by the police or the circumstances of their deaths were covered up by the police.

- Lambert operated as an undercover provocateur in an animal rights group that planted incendiary devices in stores of the Debenhams retailer in 1987. According to a

campaign letter, “those who knew Lambert under his pseudonym assert that he often berated activists for being ‘too soft’ and encouraged them to take more serious action.” It is alleged Lambert actually planted one device and, while two individuals were ultimately jailed, Lambert cannot explain “how the mysterious firebomber of Harrow store got away without being named or apprehended.”

- SDS officers spied on Members of Parliament. Lambert was one of the SDS managers who organised spying and information gathering. One of Lambert’s subordinates, Peter Francis, who has subsequently sought to expose SDS activities, said earlier this year that he personally collected information on Labour Party MPs Diane Abbott, the late Bernie Grant and current Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn. Francis said that others, including former London mayor Ken Livingstone, the late Tony Benn, Joan Ruddock and Dennis Skinner, were also targeted.

- Francis reported to Lambert when gathering information on politically active building workers during four years spent undercover. Information gathered is said to have been passed to the Consulting Association, which maintained an illegal blacklist. Earlier this year, Francis also named members of the National Union of Students, National Union of Teachers, Communication Workers Union, UNISON and the Fire Brigades Union as targets for SDS activity. He named a “Mark Jenner” as another state agent posing as a building worker in the UCATT builders union.

The letter notes, “Lambert’s apologies, such as they are, come in carefully worded phrases that only take partial responsibility for what has already been exposed.”

The letter from the four campaigners does not refer to it directly, but in 2014, Mick Creedon, the police officer in charge of the Operation Herne investigation into the SDS, was reported in the *Telegraph* as stating that over its 40 years of activity the SDS infiltrated more than 460 groups from across the political spectrum. These included “extreme left and right-wing political organisations, animal rights extremists and environmental activists.” Creedon, when launching his own findings, stated that a “staggering” amount of archival material had been accumulated.

Nowhere is this figure of 460 repeated, nor its meaning explored. If accurate, the figure implies that over four decades more than 10 new organisations per year were annually infiltrated, and their members potentially subjected to all the dirty tricks employed by Lambert and

other spies during his undercover career. The use of the identities of 1,200 dead children is another indication of the extent of police spying.

There is not a single enduring political or campaign organisation whose outlook implies the slightest criticism of the authorities that has not been, and is not currently, spied upon by the SDS, its successors or parallel outfits of the British state.

Creedon’s three reports are almost entirely focussed on explaining away the most egregious excesses of the SDS work—identity theft, undercover relationships, spying on justice campaigns, blacklisting—ignoring the essential political thrust of their activity, which is directed against the political activity and democratic rights of the working class.

Bob Lambert’s filthy career, and his easy transition into academia as an authority in “terrorism studies,” serves to underline the importance of the open letter issued by the Socialist Equality Party to the current Undercover Policing Inquiry being held by Lord Justice Pitchford.

The SEP letter states: “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.”

The SEP notes: “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.”



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