

Middlesex University Research Repository

An open access repository of

Middlesex University research

<http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk>

McIlroy, John and Campbell, Alan (2020) The early British Communist leaders, 1920–1923: a prosopographical exploration. *Labor History*, 61 (5-6) . pp. 423-465. ISSN 0023-656X [Article]
(doi:10.1080/0023656X.2020.1818711)

Final accepted version (with author's formatting)

This version is available at: <https://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/31153/>

Copyright:

Middlesex University Research Repository makes the University's research available electronically.

Copyright and moral rights to this work are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners unless otherwise stated. The work is supplied on the understanding that any use for commercial gain is strictly forbidden. A copy may be downloaded for personal, non-commercial, research or study without prior permission and without charge.

Works, including theses and research projects, may not be reproduced in any format or medium, or extensive quotations taken from them, or their content changed in any way, without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder(s). They may not be sold or exploited commercially in any format or medium without the prior written permission of the copyright holder(s).

Full bibliographic details must be given when referring to, or quoting from full items including the author's name, the title of the work, publication details where relevant (place, publisher, date), pagination, and for theses or dissertations the awarding institution, the degree type awarded, and the date of the award.

If you believe that any material held in the repository infringes copyright law, please contact the Repository Team at Middlesex University via the following email address:

eprints@mdx.ac.uk

The item will be removed from the repository while any claim is being investigated.

See also repository copyright: re-use policy: <http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/policies.html#copy>

Title (bold)

The early British Communist leaders, 1920–1923: a prosopographical exploration

Author name

John McIlroy

Alan Campbell

Affiliation (university, place)

Business School, Middlesex University,
London, UK

Department of History, University of
Liverpool, Liverpool, UK

Manuscript ID CLAH (if known)

CLAH-2020-0007

Email address (for each author, identify corresponding author)

j.mcilroy@mdx.ac.uk

qx03@liv.ac.uk

[corresponding author]

Full postal address (for each author)

John McIlroy:
35 Clothorn Road, Manchester M20 6BP, UK

Alan Campbell:
6/2 Cumberland Street,
Edinburgh, EH3 6SA, UK

Date of Submission: 8 February 2020

Date of Acceptance: 17 August 2020

Autobiographical sketch

John McIlroy is Visiting Professor of Employment Relations at Middlesex University Business School. He was formerly Professor of Industrial Relations at Keele University and Reader in Sociology at The University of Manchester. He coedited *1956: John Saville, E. P. Thompson and The Reasoner* (2016); *Trade Unions in a Neoliberal World* (2010); *Histories of Labour: National and International Perspectives* (2010); *The Struggle for Dignity: Industrial Politics and the 1926 Mining Lockout* (2nd ed., 2009); *The Post-War Compromise: British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics 1945–1964* (2nd ed., 2007); and *The High Tide of British Trade Unionism: Trade Unions and Industrial Politics 1964–1979* (2nd ed., 2007). His books include *Going to Law* (1980); *Industrial Tribunals* (1983); *Strike!* (1984); *The Permanent Revolution? Conservative Law and the Trade Unions* (1991); and *Trade Unions in Britain Today* (2nd ed., 1995). His work has appeared in *Past and Present*, *Journal of Contemporary History*, *International Review of Social History*, *American Communist History*, *History Workshop Journal*, *Critique*, *European Journal of Industrial Relations* and the *British Journal of Industrial Relations*. For 25 years he organised classes for trade unionists.

Alan Campbell is Honorary Senior Fellow and formerly Reader in History at the University of Liverpool. His books include *The Lanarkshire Miners: A Social History of their Trade Unions, 1775–1874* (1979) and *The Scottish Miners* (2000, two vols.). He co-edited *Histories of Labour: National and International Perspectives* (2010); *The Struggle for Dignity:*

Industrial Politics and the 1926 Mining Lockout (2nd ed., 2009); *The Post-War Compromise: British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics 1945–1964* (2nd ed., 2007); *The High Tide of British Trade Unionism: Trade Unions and Industrial Politics 1964–1979* (2nd ed., 2007); *Party People, Communist Lives: Explorations in Communist Biography* (2001) and *Miners, Trade Unions and Politics* (1996). His research has been published in the *Journal of Contemporary History*, *International Review of Social History*, *European History Quarterly*, *American Communist History*, *Labour/Le Travail*, *Labour History Review*, and *Twentieth Century British History*. He served on the Executive Committee of the Society for the Study of Labour History for many years and as its Chair from 2008 to 2011.

Acknowledgements (if any)

We wish to thank Terry Brotherstone, Robert Duncan, Joanne E. Einion-Waller, Hywel Francis, Keith Laybourn, Daryl Leeworthy, Cyril Pearce, Craig Phelan, Don Watson and two anonymous referees.

Funding details (if any) n/a

Disclosure statement (if any)

No conflict of interest was reported by the authors

Keywords (minimum 4, maximum 7)

Communist Party of Great Britain; prosopography; leadership; Executive Committee; British Socialist Party; Comintern; Socialist Labour Party.

Abstract (maximum 220 words, one paragraph)

The members of its governing Executive Committee constituted the national leadership of the Communist Party of Great Britain. Prosopographical analysis which employs both quantitative and qualitative methods is utilized to explore the origins; age; education; occupations; experience and affiliation; party career; and destination of 47 of 48 members of the committee who held office between 1920 and 1923. The survey presents, in many cases for the first time, details of their background and activity. Against previous assertions of youthfulness and Scottish and Welsh influence, it demonstrates the majority were born in England before 1890 and that while almost two-thirds were skilled workers or miners, a fifth worked in white-collar occupations. There were high rates of turnover and discontinuity: more than 80% of representatives served briefly and 73% were never re-elected after 1923. Up to half were no longer in the party by the end of the decade and only four remained in its leadership after 1932. Mini-biographies of the 33 Communists whose leading role was restricted to 'the long foundation period' confirm the weakness and frequently ineffective and confused nature of its leadership as well as the significant difficulties faced by early British Communism.

Introduction: a hundred years ago

A century ago, the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) emerged from protracted negotiations conducted between 1918 and 1921 by organizations to the left of the Labour Party.¹ The Independent Labour Party (ILP), a non-Marxist body affiliated to Labour, mustered 37,000 members in 1920 but played little part and contributed at most a few hundred members to the CPGB. The driving force, the British Socialist Party (BSP), claimed 6,000 members. Descended from the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), launched by H.M. Hyndman in 1883–1884, the BSP broke with his chauvinist, pro-war politics in 1916, embraced the Russian Revolution and advocated a Third International and a Bolshevik Britain. The Socialist Labour Party (SLP), which originated in a 1903 breakaway from the SDF espousing the ideas of the American leader, Daniel De Leon, numbered its adherents in hundreds. It withdrew from the negotiations leaving a breakaway Communist Unity Group (CUG) to help deliver a united organization.

Other participants in its nativity were the Workers' Socialist Federation (WSF), inspired by Sylvia Pankhurst, which in 1920, with fewer than 600 members, declared itself the Communist Party-British Section of the Third International (CP-BSTI); the Communist Labour Party (CLP), a transitional coalition which evolved out of abortive attempts to develop a Scottish Communist Party; the South Wales Communist Council, which replaced the syndicalist-inflected South Wales Socialist Society and linked up with the CUG; the leadership of the National Shop Stewards and Workers' Committee Movement (NSS&WCM), the product and engine of war-time militancy; the Guild Communists, a faction within G.D.H. Cole's National Guilds League, predominantly composed of intellectuals who advocated workers' control of industry; and the Socialist Prohibition Fellowship which preached temperance (Challinor, 1977, pp.171–256; Hinton, 1973; Kendall, 1969, pp.196–302; Klugmann, 1969, pp.13–74; Macfarlane, 1966, pp.17–72;

McKay, 1994; Thorpe, 2000a, pp.19–34; Shipway, 1988, pp.3–78). Fusion was propelled by the prestige of the Russian revolution and the infant Soviet state and facilitated by pronouncements from Lenin – armed with the authority of the architect of the only successful workers’ revolution – which clarified issues dividing British Marxists, particularly participation in parliament and the Labour Party. It was lubricated by subsidies from the Third International (Comintern) launched in March 1919. The CPGB entered the world at a Unity Convention in London in July–August 1920. The party was completed by adhesion of the CP-BSTI and CLP at a conference in Leeds in January 1921 and entry of the ILP left wing that spring (Kendall, 1969, p.214; Laybourn & Murphy, 1999, pp.42–47; Macfarlane, 1966, pp.56–57). The CPGB was conceived and it developed on the margins: its midwives failed to engineer a split in either Labour or the trade unions.

It brought together most of Britain’s revolutionary socialists. They reflected the leftward swing of ‘the Great Unrest’, the ascendant syndicalist mood of 1910–1914, wartime militancy, and, crucially, the inspiration from Moscow which re-charged Britain’s weak and warring Marxist organizations (Hinton, 1983, pp.83–108). However, radicalism quickly dissipated. From 1920, economic downturn sent accelerating union membership into reverse, ravaged the shop stewards’ movement, dampened militancy and reinforced resumption of the Labour Party’s forward march, strengthened by the 1918 socialist constitution and provision for individual membership (Cronin, 1984, pp.19–34; Hinton, 1983, pp.108–118; Hinton & Hyman, 1975, pp.11–26; Savage & Miles, 1994, pp.76–86). In August 1920, the CPGB claimed 5,125 members, a year later 4,677: Labour would soon enrol 200,000 (Thorpe, 2000b, p.781). Enthusiasm for the Comintern, soviets and ‘the dictatorship of the proletariat’, did not entirely banish differences between former BSPers with a tradition of working within the Labour Party, to which the BSP had been affiliated, and former SLPers and other leftists habituated to denouncing parliamentary action and the Labour Party, and emphasising instead

direct action and industrial struggle (Bullock, 2011). Personality clashes exacerbated by rivalry over party posts and dissension over Soviet subsidies disorganized a fragile party born in a hostile climate (Morgan, 2006, pp.34–59; Thorpe, 2000a, pp.43–44, 50–51).²

Repression restricted activity (Thorpe, 2000a, pp.47–48). Like its predecessors, the CPGB initially operated on the basis of federalism, combined with crude ideas of ‘centralization’, local autonomy, a distinction between the ‘political’ and the ‘industrial’ and conversion through propaganda rather than organized *party* intervention in the labour movement and civil society, based on the conception that workers learned primarily in struggle. Engagement in the major industrial disputes during 1921–1922 was largely ineffective (Hinton & Hyman, 1975, pp.23–27; Macfarlane, 1966, pp.117–122). Attempts to ‘Bolshevize’ the CPGB initiated by the Comintern-inspired 1922 *Report on Party Organization* had their supporters but also engendered incomprehension and resistance.³ There was confusion over democratic centralism and the united front tactics demanded by Moscow. This was a shadow of a combat party – let alone ‘the leading party of the working class’. Through 1922, it was disabled by antagonism between a caucus around the SLP/CUG, shop stewards’ leader, Arthur MacManus, and a group animated by the politically inexperienced intellectual, Rajani Palme Dutt.⁴ By November 1922 membership had collapsed to 2,761 (Thorpe, 2000b, p.781) and the Comintern representative informed Moscow: ‘The party is in a catastrophic state.’⁵ The following summer MacManus conceded: ‘The Party membership today was just beginning to understand the implications of the revolutionary movement’; Karl Radek claimed the party ‘had no organized contact with the masses’; and Grigori Zinoviev maintained the British section was ‘the Achilles heel of the International’.⁶

These judgements were delivered at the English [*sic*] Commission convened by the Comintern in Moscow in June-July 1923 to ameliorate the position and build on progress at

the October 1922 Congress. Its prescriptions for re-organizing the CPGB, particularly its trade union work, and its guidance on the united front brought the curtain down on ‘the long foundation period’ and laid the basis for a fresh start. Aspects of the foundation years have been studied by historians and there are biographies of key leaders (Callaghan, 1993; Darlington, 1998; Morgan, 1993; Squires, 1990).⁷ What remains conspicuously absent from the historiography is a prosopography which synthesizes biographical data and begins to employ quantitative *and* qualitative methods, statistical analysis *and* group biography to explore the collective leadership of British Communism (Keats-Rohan, 2007; McIlroy & Campbell, 2019, 2020; Stone, 1987). Given the importance placed on leadership by Communist parties and the role democratic centralism assigned it in assembling, educating, coordinating and mobilizing members, as well as interacting with the Comintern, this is a significant omission.⁸

The Executive Committee (EC) governed the CPGB between congresses.⁹ Its membership provides historians with a reasonably comprehensive picture of the party’s national leadership,¹⁰ although some significant activists did not feature on it.¹¹ As part of ongoing research into Communist leaders through the 1920s, we studied 47 of the 48 representatives who sat on the five ECs appointed/elected between August 1920 and October 1922.¹² We collected details of their lives, origins, background, education, occupation, earlier affiliations, party careers and subsequent destinations. We recuperated actors neglected in the historiography and amplified information on others. Written to commemorate the foundation of the CPGB, this article fills a gap by providing a statistical analysis of almost the entire EC membership during its first years. It proceeds to people the picture by presenting mini-biographies of the 33 Communists who never again sat on the committee after 1923. The paper concludes with brief observations about the state of the leadership at the beginning of that year. A second essay using similar methods will examine those representatives from the

foundation period who continued on the EC between 1923 and 1929. The present survey is exploratory: it demonstrates both the possibilities and the difficulties with prosopographical analysis and helps illuminate a number of questions. How was membership of the pre-Communist groups reflected in the composition of early ECs? How far were intellectuals as well as working-class activists involved? Was the committee representative of party members? Did continuity or change predominate in its composition? Were the pioneers discarded or did ‘the long foundation period’ witness the emergence of a party elite which endured through succeeding decades?

The Communist leadership, 1920–23: a statistical sketch

Tables 1–5 list all the members of the EC elected/appointed between August 1920 and October 1922. Information on these 48 Communists is tabulated in the **Appendix**. Details are completely lacking on Mrs Thomas and she has been largely discounted from our calculations. Our sample of 47 – 98% of the total – is substantial although the data on individuals varies. The information in the **Appendix** comes from biographies, biographical dictionaries, directories such as *The Labour Who’s Who, 1924*, files on individuals in the CPGB and Comintern archives, and reports in the left-wing and local press, as well as genealogical websites.

[Insert Tables 1–5 here]

We turn first to the national and geographical origins of EC members. Henry Pelling’s conclusion (1958, p.15) that the CPGB’s early membership ‘consisted to a remarkable degree, of persons of non-English origin’, contrasts with our findings for the EC. The majority for whom we have information – 31 or 68.9.1% – were born in England.¹³ A further 10 (22.2%) started life in Scotland, 3 (6.7%) in Wales and 1 (2.2%) in Ireland. We lack information for Cook and McDonald, although it seems likely they were born in Wales and

Scotland respectively. A ‘Celtic fringe’ of around a third is noteworthy in relation to the small populations of those countries. Dutt was the only Communist of colour. The group was overwhelmingly British and predominantly English, and the only foreign-born parents were those of Dutt (Bengali father, Swedish mother) and Kerran (German father) while MacManus, Beech, Murphy, McLean and probably Lavin had at least one Irish parent and Malone and Gallacher Irish ancestry.

Geographical clusters may make for contact and perhaps cohesion among actors; alternatively, strong regional affinities may feed into overall fragmentation or even conflict. The residence of future EC members in 1920 is listed in the **Appendix**. They were concentrated in the metropolis – 17 lived in London – with patchy coverage elsewhere: 5 in Glasgow, 2 each in Sheffield, Newcastle and Birmingham, 1 in Liverpool while Manchester was unrepresented. Two each came from the Scottish, Welsh and Yorkshire coalfields but Britain’s manufacturing and industrial heartlands were not dominant. There was little evidence of economic migration. The picture is distorted by political migration to London, as with Bell and MacManus whose origins and initial political activity were in Glasgow. **Table 6** compares the location of EC representatives in 1920 with the distribution of members in the party districts in 1922, the earliest year for which such data is available. The percentage of leaders from the two largest districts, London followed by Scotland, corresponded to that of the party as a whole; Yorkshire and the Midlands were over-represented on ECs, Lancashire significantly under-represented, Wales less so. Data on religious background is fragmentary. Gallacher, MacManus and probably Lavin came from Catholic families. Several were from Church of England backgrounds: Deer, Inkpin, Kerran and Malone; Bell and McLean’s parents were Presbyterians, Mellor’s Unitarian. There was one Quaker (Deacon) but in contrast to some Communist parties elsewhere, no members of Jewish heritage, although Montefiore’s husband and Malone and Kerran’s partners were Jewish (cf. the US case:

McIlroy & Campbell, 2019, pp.186–187). Kerran’s wife was a fellow BSP member and most likely joined the CPGB. This reminds us that membership could be a family affair. Beech, Bell, Braddock, Fletcher, Inkipin, Jackson, Peet, Pollitt, Stewart, and Young all had relatives in the party.

[Insert Table 6 here]

It has been asserted on the basis of limited and impressionistic evidence that the CPGB was ‘a young man’s party’ whose leadership consisted of ‘relatively young men’.¹⁴ In terms of the gender inequality implicit in this statement, only two women featured on the committee, 4%, compared with a female membership of 11% in the party as a whole in 1922 (Thorpe, 2000b, p.784). The data permits greater precision: in 1920, the mean age of the 46 representatives for whom date of birth was available was 35.9 years, but this figure is distorted by including the Young Communist League (YCL) representative, Young, aged 19, at one extreme and the 69-year old Montefiore at the other. The median age of 32.5 is a more accurate indicator. If we aggregate those elected or delegated to the EC in August 1920 and January 1921 into a single foundation cohort, we find it was a little older: the mean age in 1920 of the 24 for whom birth data is available was 37.7 years, the median age 34.5 years. It is possible to discern a slight increase in youthfulness in the group elected in October 1922 (see **Table 5**), although it should not be exaggerated. The mean age in 1922 of the nine elected in October of that year was 35.4 years, the median age 34 years.

While we do not know whether the membership as a whole was youthful or not, EC representatives in their mid-thirties were, by contemporary standards, ‘in the prime of life’ while those over 40 might be perceived as approaching middle age. In terms of Lenin’s aperçu, a revolutionary’s worst vice is to be over 55, Montefiore and Hodgson and Watts, 54 and 55 respectively in 1920, were dinosaurs. A further 10, Fletcher, Hewlett, Jackson, McKie, Pratt, Silvester, Stewart, Vaughan, Nat Watkins and Willis, were born in the 1870s

while 15 – Bell, Ford, Gallacher, Kerran, Inkpin, Lavin, Leckie, McGeachan, MacManus, Mellor, Murphy, Paul, Shillitoe, Tom Watkins and Wheeler – 32.6% of our sample – were children of the 1880s. Thus, a majority, 28 or 60.9% of the group for whom age data was available, were born before 1890. Many attained maturity two decades before 1920 and were over 40 – in some cases significantly so – when the CPGB was formed. This finding reinforces doubts about the ‘relative youthfulness’ of the early leadership and is, contrariwise, suggestive of the baggage they brought to this innovative venture. That said, the largest decennial cohort, 17 or 37% of the total, were born in the 1890s, more precisely between 1890 and 1896. They had less experience than their elders but even the youngest, Bird and Dutt, were approaching their mid-twenties when the party was inaugurated.

With the exception of Young (b.1901), the entire cohort had attained the political age of reason before the Russian revolution, albeit at different points between 1870 and 1917. The handful born before 1870 knew life and politics prior to the emergence of organized British Marxism – Montefiore was 32, Watts 22, in its birth year. Those born in the 1870s began work and became politically aware in the two succeeding decades which saw the SDF become a feature of the left, the establishment of the ILP, moves to form a Labour Representation Committee (LRC) and development of ‘the New Unionism’ of the unskilled. The 1890s generation entered the workforce and commenced their encounter with politics on the eve of ‘the Great Unrest’, the high tide of militancy, syndicalism and radicalization between 1910 and 1914, and were young men at the outbreak of the Great War. Allowing for Young’s precocity, the group as a whole underwent the tumults of the twentieth century’s second decade. But they experienced them differentially. Their reactions to events were influenced by family background, education, occupation, and filtered through their contemporary environment and political affiliation, as well as already accumulated experience. They participated in and observed the years of unrest and the trials of war

through the lens of socialism; within that optic, reception of events could vary. Generational analysis which commences by bracketing individuals together by age and geography, sometimes proceeds to connect such cohorts and social change by emphasising the formative significance of prevailing material and ideological circumstances in the labour market and labour movement at key points in the life cycle – beginning work, joining a union, becoming a militant. This approach requires attention to experience and mediating factors, to differences of psychology and temperament, individual interests and circumstances – and contingency – which mould responses; as well as the propensity to modify beliefs and values as the world changes. Difference and the uniqueness of human beings means generational analysis requires amplification by individual biography (Abrams, 1982, pp.227–266; Mannheim, 1952, pp.276–320; Phelps Brown, 1986, pp.164–165).

Both Vaughan and Stewart were part of the ‘1870s generation’. But the former’s early experience and reflection on it led him to support the Liberal Party; contact with the SDF produced a switch in allegiance. Stewart’s youthful understanding of religion and society prompted affiliation to the Prohibition Party; it was only in his thirties, around 1910, that the Scot became a socialist. The war made him, like the Londoner, Vaughan, a conscientious objector. Unlike Vaughan, perhaps because of the Scottish background of its initiators, Bell and MacManus, he turned towards the CUG. Malone, Peet and Pollitt were all born in 1890 and Cook the following year. Unsurprisingly, given his background, Malone supported the war and emerged as a Liberal MP while Peet and Cook became conscientious objectors. Pollitt, Peet’s fellow BSPer, opposed the war but spent most of it prioritizing defence of union conditions.¹⁵ As 1917 made itself felt, Malone moved from Liberalism to the BSP. Peet remained loyal to that party while Pollitt turned towards the anti-parliamentarianism of the WSF. Cook gravitated from the SLP towards the CUG. The conclusions they reached in the immediate aftermath of 1917 were diverse. Moreover, accident and the fortuitous impact of

individuals played a part. Innocent of socialist divisions, Malone joined the most prominent group while at the time of Peet and Pollitt's initiation into the BSP, the SLP was tenuously available in London and Manchester – although this cannot explain Webb's adhesion in Ashton around 1910.¹⁶ Bell recalled how SLP founder, George S. Yates, who exited the SLP after its early years, mentored MacManus, Paul and himself, while Bird and Kirker were pupils of the Glasgow pedagogue, John Maclean, who opposed the CPGB. Lenin directly influenced Beech, Gallacher and Murphy while Maxim Litvinov enlightened Bell and MacManus.

Generational analysis also attempts to take some account of common understandings and mentalities. Self-perception, the way in which protagonists, whether or not closely aligned by age or background, conceive themselves, contemporaneously and retrospectively, as a collective bound together by shared attitudes and reactions to events may constitute a significant factor in how generations are made. For most of our cohort, similar responses to social and political developments and imperialist war forged important bonds. But the October revolution was the decisive unifying event which impelled units grouped together by age to move collectively to construct British Communism: this was overall and above all 'the generation of 1917' (Foster, 2014, pp. 6–8, and see the sources cited in notes 11, 14, pp. 337).

A large majority of EC members for whom this data is available – 35 (81.4%) – enrolled in the CPGB in 1920, only 8 (18.6%) in 1921.¹⁷ Details of their membership of different organizations prior to entering the party are contained in the **Appendix** and tabulated in **Table 7**. Almost equal numbers – 18 and 16 – had been members of the BSP and SLP, even though the former was considerably larger. The dissident CUG groups, not the SLP, were represented at the 1920 unity convention yet only 9 leaders recorded in the **Appendix** were identified with them. Moreover, some SLP members who joined the CPGB did not join the CUG. Murphy, who had taken a temporary turn to questioning unity with the

BSP, was the most prominent example, while Brain attended the foundation congress as a Birmingham SLP not CUG delegate; McGeachan remained active in the SLP as late as October 1920.¹⁸ The contrast between our figures on previous BSP and SLP affiliation and the political composition of the 1920 convention delegates is striking: 98 (63%) represented BSP branches, only 25 (16%) CUG groups, and 32 (21%) a range of miscellaneous bodies (Macfarlane, 1966, p.59).¹⁹ In terms of EC positions, the SLP/CUG punched well above its weight. The contrast is less dramatic if we examine the prior allegiance of those on the first two ECs in August 1920 and January 1921. From a cohort of 25, 11 (44%) were members of the BSP and 6 (24%) of the SLP/CUG, 3 each (24%) came from the CLP and CP-BSTI and 2 (8%) from other groups, although Stewart was also associated with the CUG. If we compare the antecedents of the EC elected in October 1922, we find a more even balance: 3 were former BSP members (although Pollitt had also joined the WSF), 3 were from the SLP/CUG and 3 (including Stewart) from other bodies. This trend reinforces the prominence of former SLP/CUG members evident in our larger sample.

[Insert Table 7 here]

Returning to that sample, 9 (19.2%) members at some point adhered to the ILP, although none joined the CPGB with ‘the ILP left wing’ at Easter 1921. Rather, the ILP more often provided an entry to the socialist movement which proved transitional and was superseded by subsequent revolutionary commitment. A further site of pre-Communist experience for engineering and metal workers embracing 9 EC representatives was the NSS&WCM and local organizations such as the Workers’ Committees on the Clyde (Bell, Gallacher, Leckie, McLean and MacManus) and Sheffield (Murphy). Some, for example, MacManus and Bell, were party activists before the war; others such as Murphy, who joined the SLP in 1917, were militant syndicalists drawn to revolutionary party politics by their wartime industrial experiences. The unofficial reform movements in the Scottish, Welsh and

Yorkshire coalfields accounted for 5 entries. Anti-parliamentarianism was additionally represented by the SLP/CUG and former members of the CP-BSTI (3), the WSF (2), the Communist League (1) and the Labour Abstentionist Party (1). Six of the EC had adhered to the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) or supported its British analogue, the Industrial Workers of Great Britain (IWGB), and Gallacher had been influenced by the IWW (Duncan, 2004). Sympathy for Irish republicanism marked leaders from Glasgow and Liverpool – cities with strong Irish subcultures: MacManus assisted the apostle of revolution in Ireland, James Connolly, by printing the *Irish Worker* on the SLP presses and smuggling it to Ireland; Leckie was a Sinn Fein sympathiser and Malone had links with republicanism via his family; Lavin was regularly interrogated by the police concerning IRA operations in the west of Scotland; and Braddock had connections with that organization (Campbell, 2000, pp.164–167; Davies, 2004; Doonan, 2014; MacDougall, 1981, pp.23, 36; Rowbotham, 1986, pp.20–21).

The social origins of EC members were overwhelmingly proletarian. Of the 44 for whom such information was available (see **Appendix**), 37 (84%) came from working-class families; and it is reasonable to infer that two of three for whom such information was not available – Lavin and McDonald – did so. Their Victorian fathers' employment included 2 clerical workers; 15 skilled tradesmen, covering 'labour aristocratic' occupations such as compositors, coachmakers, piano makers and cabinetmakers, as well as carpenters, shoemakers, tailors, bakers and blacksmiths; 6 coal miners; and a range of semi- and unskilled workers, from seafarers, fishermen and signalmen to labourers. The 7 (16%) middle-class fathers encompassed a variety of statuses: from the petit-bourgeois father of Kerran, a shop owner, and Pratt, a manager, through professional occupations such as doctors, clergymen and missionaries, to fully-fledged members of the bourgeoisie, such as

Montefiore's family, and Malone's aristocratic antecedents. The mothers were almost invariably the housewives characteristic of Victorian married women.

Although there was evidence of limited social mobility, the occupational pattern of EC members broadly followed that of their parents. Of the 46 for whom such information is available – and some pursued more than one occupation – 20 or 43.5% can be classified as skilled workers, including 12 (26.1%) in metal working trades, particularly engineering, as well as compositors, a wagon-builder, a tailor and a baker. There were 8 (17.4%) coal miners – which contrasts with Pelling's view that miners were 'strikingly' represented among the membership at large – and 6 (13%) had unskilled jobs. As a whole, the group were far from archetypal proletarians. A fifth were employed in white-collar occupations: 4 were journalists, 3 clerks, 2 commercial travellers. There was also a handful of small businessmen. Cook owned two shops; Deacon had a tobacconist and newsagent's shop and became a lecturer, serving as company secretary to several firms in the City of London; Paul was a market trader. While we lack systematic data on the occupational composition of the party as whole in these years, the 43.5% of our sample with a background in metalworking and coal mining accords with impressionistic accounts of the later predominance of these groups (Pelling, 1958, pp.16–17; Thorpe, 2000b, pp.786–787).

From 1920 our sample underwent a degree of occupational homogenization, as many, in some cases briefly, occupied paid party positions. EC representatives received expenses, but on our calculation at least 23 (48.9%) were at some point on the payroll, filling posts such as chair; secretary; national organizer; heads of the Information, Electoral and Secret Supplementary Departments; editors and similar roles; publications and bookshop managers; district organizers; representatives to the Comintern; and officers of the British Bureau of the Red International of Labour Unions (BBRILU/RILU) and other associated organizations. Benchmark remuneration for these professional revolutionaries was £5 per week which in

1922 cushioned many of the party's 55 full-time staff against unemployment and placed them above most workers in the wages hierarchy. A burgeoning bureaucracy, out of all proportion to the CPGB's membership and income from dues, was pruned in the wake of the Commission on Party Reorganization and succeeding cutbacks outside our period.²⁰ While Inkpin monopolised the secretary's position throughout this period, it was subsequently occupied, with an extended remit, by two others in our sample, Pollitt (1929–1939, 1941–1956) and Dutt (1939–1941). Peet and Stewart served briefly as acting secretary during Inkpin's two prison terms. Three of the group, Bell, Lavin and MacManus, served terms in Moscow as the CPGB representative to the Comintern between 1920 and 1923 – as did Gallacher and Murphy later in the decade. All bar Lavin were elected to the Comintern executive (ECCI) – as was Pollitt on several occasions from 1924. Stewart was a candidate member of the ECCI in 1923 and 1924, as was Dutt in the 1930s (McIlroy & Campbell, 2005, pp.206–229)

Data on union membership is incomplete but follows the general occupational distribution with some individuals having held cards in more than one union over their working careers. The largest group encompassed 12 in the metal-working unions: Amalgamated Society of Engineering Workers (ASE)/Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU), 8; Amalgamated Society of Boilermakers, 1; National Union of Iron Founders, 1; Associated Iron Moulders of Scotland, 1; National Union of Brass Founders, 1. They were followed by 8 in the district mining unions: 3 in the South Wales Miners' Federation (SWMF), 2 each in the Fife and Yorkshire associations, and 1 in the Nottinghamshire union, all of which were affiliated to the Miners' Federation of Great Britain. The London Society of Compositors, the National Union of Clerks and the National Union of Journalists each had 2 members on the EC; and the Electrical Trades Union (ETU), the Transport and General Workers' Union, the General and Municipal Workers' Union, the Railway Wagon Builders,

the National Union of Seamen, the Amalgamated Society of Operative Bakers and the Amalgamated Association of Carpenters and Joiners one each. Only two, Deer and Stewart, had been employed as paid organizers for trade unions while Willis had worked as a functionary of the London Society of Tailors and Tailoresses.²¹

Unsurprisingly, given their origins, few progressed beyond elementary schooling. **Table 8** provides details of the five (11%) who underwent some form of higher education. They may, therefore, be broadly classified as intellectuals, although in Comintern terms only Dutt might be thought to merit that appellation. The relative absence of intellectuals from the EC evokes the *ouvriérisme* of the early CPGB and many working-class members' deep-seated suspicion of those frequently disparaged as 'semi-intellectuals' and 'pseudo-intellectuals'.²² The contingent of 'worker-intellectuals' was typified by Bell, Jackson, Murphy and Paul, while Independent Working-Class Education (IWCE) also featured strongly in the curricula vitae of Bird, Cook, Hewlett, Kirker, Lavin, Shaw and Tom Watkins.

[Insert Table 8 here]

When we examine the 5 ECs between 1920 and October 1922, discontinuity of personnel is noteworthy. Of the 48 members, 20 were elected to one committee, 20 to two, 5 to three, 1 to four and 2 to five. Therefore 83% were delegated or elected to only one or two committees, while only 6% sat on all or most of them: this latter group consisted of MacManus, chair, and Inkpin, secretary, (5 committees), Hodgson, treasurer (4 committees), followed by Bell, Deacon, Murphy, Paul and Webb (3 committees). In the context of discussion of antecedents, it is notable that 5 of this group of 8 were former SLP/CUG members compared with 3 from the BSP. Within this overall picture, we can discern a diminishing rate of turnover. **Table 9** shows the percentage of newcomers to the four committees elected after the 1920 conference. While the figures for the two 1921 ECs reflect

the challenge of cohering a party from disparate elements, the two 1922 committees indicate a relative degree of stability, although a third to a quarter were debutantes.

[Insert Table 9 here]

A glance beyond 1922 underlines discontinuity going forward: an overwhelming majority, 35 (73%) of the EC population of 48 for the years 1920–1922, were birds of passage who never served on an EC again. Only 13 (27%), a small minority, sat on at least one other EC during the remainder of the decade: see **Table 10**. Of a possible maximum of 6 ECs in the years 1923–1929, 8 sat on between one and five committees: Bell, Inkpin and Jackson sat on 5; Nat Watkins on 4; MacManus (who died in 1927) 3; Brain, 2; Deacon and Webb, 1 each. A smaller group of 5 – Dutt, Gallacher, Murphy, Pollitt and Stewart – sat on all of them. The antecedents of these 13 survivors highlight the continuing presence of ex-SLP/CUG activists before 1929: 6 were previously members, while 3 were former BSPers and 4 were associated with other organizations. The smaller group of 5 was more diffuse: Gallacher and Pollitt, ex-BSP, Murphy, SLP, Dutt, Guild Communists, and Stewart, Socialist Prohibition (although also associated with the CUG). The 13 survivors are examined in greater detail in a forthcoming study of EC membership during the remainder of the 1920s. But if we apply an inevitably arbitrary threshold of election to at least three ECs in these years, it is possible to isolate a smaller group of 10 – Bell, Dutt, Gallacher, Inkpin, Jackson, MacManus, Murphy, Pollitt, Stewart and Nat Watkins, who in numerical terms at least, that caveat is important, dominated the leadership before 1929 which witnessed the triumph of the ultra-left Third Period and a caesura in both Communist politics and the composition of the leadership (see **Table 10**).

[Insert Table 10 here]

However, it would be rash to draw straightforward deductions regarding power or national popularity in the party from frequency of EC membership – certainly not over the

initiatary three years under scrutiny here – although it may constitute a precondition for them. While the statistics suggest a degree of SLP/CUG representation out of proportion to their political strength, the record suggests that for a time a great deal of power was concentrated in the hands of one former SLP leader, MacManus. This stemmed not simply from his position as party chair, although before 1922 ‘centralization’ was sometimes taken to mean that all important decisions went through his office, but from the control he exercised, in conjunction with the former BSPer Inkpin, as secretary, over Comintern funds and party business. Bell and Stewart worked with them while ex-SLPers Murphy and Paul lent general support. However, there was opposition from Dutt, Gallacher and Pollitt who cannot usefully be characterized as a BSP combination.²³ By the end of our period, change presaged by the composition of the streamlined October 1922 EC was in train and the significance of past identities was beginning to diminish.

The party membership of a significant portion of our cohort was short-lived: 13 EC members had left the party by 1925 and 3 more by 1930. The initial destination of 9 – Braddock, Deacon, Deer, Kerran, Mellor, Malone, Shaw, Silvester and Whitehead – was the Labour Party, which offered more promising prospects. Kirker’s departure was involuntary, following imprisonment. Hodgson’s ‘private life’ intruded. Death and ill health took their toll. Four members died in the 1920s: Hewlett in 1921, Tom Watkins in 1924, MacManus in 1927 and Watts – the only one of this quartet to live to a ripe old age – in 1928. Montefiore returned from Australia in her late 70s and retired from political life after losing her sight.²⁴ By 1930, at least 20 (43%) of those listed in our **Appendix** – lack of comprehensive information means the figure may be higher – no longer featured in the CPGB. We lack systematic data for the membership at large and the populations of the EC and the party are not directly comparable. However, significant fluctuations in CPGB membership in its early years indicate retention was a major challenge: for example, membership declined from 5,116

in June 1922 to 2,761 in November of that year, a drop of 46% (Thorpe, 2000b, p.781).

Impressionistic though such evidence is, we may hazard that the loss of 40–50% of the 1920–1922 EC cohort by the decade’s end was of a similar order to defections from the party as whole.

Statistical analysis, essential to prosopographical approaches, takes us only so far in extending our knowledge of the early Communist leadership. It needs fleshing out with biographical detail of its protagonists. The next section examines those whose membership of the EC and in some cases the party, was an episode which did not survive ‘the long foundation period’.

Birds of passage

George Deer (1890–1974) embodied many of the virtues of the post-Hyndman leadership of the BSP. Actively opposed to the war, rooted in the working class and trade unionism, eschewing sectarianism and imbued with the conviction that the Labour Party could be infused with socialist consciousness, as a member of the BSP executive between 1916 and 1920, he was directly engaged in the creation of British Communism. Signalling its fragility, he quit the party within a year. The son of a Grimsby fisherman, he left school at 12, working as a candlemaker’s assistant, soap salesman, on the docks, the railways and in engineering before reaching the lower rungs of union officialdom. In 1915, he was appointed an organizer of the Workers’ Union. The following year, as a conscientious objector, he appeared before the Central Tribunal defending the anti-war movement and international socialism and subsequently served time in Wormwood Scrubs. By 1920, he was an official of the Dock, Riverside and General Workers’ Union which in 1922 became part of the new Transport and General Workers’ Union, a linchpin of the Labour Party.²⁵

He personified Labour's hold on sections of the BSP. In 1919 he expressed weariness at attempts at unity with the other groups and pressed for CPGB affiliation to Labour at the 1920 Unity Convention, asserting problems could be circumvented by simply informing Labour that the BSP had changed its name and the CPGB inherited its position. Once it was apparent key leaders inclined towards utilizing the application as a platform to expound the CPGB's revolutionary principles, minimizing chances of success, Deer, who had witnessed the divisive impact of Russian influence on the BSP leadership, looked for the exit. In 1922, he became a Labour councillor in Lincoln – he was Mayor in 1933–34 – unsuccessfully contesting Gainsborough in the 1929 and 1931 general elections and Lincoln in 1935. He received an OBE in 1944 during his term as Sheriff of Lincolnshire and won Lincoln for Labour in 1945, switching to Newark in 1950. He had travelled far from his revolutionary days. A parliamentary whip who had nothing to do with successive Labour lefts, let alone Communists, he retired in 1964 (*Call*, 12 April 1919; Kendall, 1969, p.251; Klugmann, 1966, p.44; Macfarlane, 1966, pp.94, 22; Stenton & Lees, 1981).

His spell in the CPGB similarly left little political mark on Deer's fellow Yorkshireman, Britain's first Communist MP, Cecil John L'Estrange Malone (1890–1965) who also gravitated to Labour. Both subscribed to the Church of England; otherwise, their backgrounds and temperaments could not have been more different; Malone's father was a prosperous Beverley clergyman from an Anglo-Irish landowning family in which revolutionaries were not unknown – Malone was related to the Irish republicans Constance Markiewicz and Eva Gore-Booth. His mother came from the family of the Earls of Scarborough. He was educated at private schools and the Royal Naval Colleges at Dartmouth and Greenwich before entering the navy where he pioneered seaborne aviation. He received the OBE for distinguished war service and, following a stint as First Air Attaché at the British embassy in Paris, retired as a lieutenant-colonel. Elected in 1918 on a Coalition Liberal ticket

as MP for East Leyton, he was transformed by a trip to Russia into the author of the celebratory *The Russian Republic*, a popular speaker on ‘Hands Off Russia’ platforms and a BSP activist who exhibited limited understanding of its politics (Martin & Saville, 1984, pp.159–165; Milton, 1973, pp.219–220, 227–229). Excelling at demagoguery, hobnobbing with Soviet agents, and planning a British Red Army linked to the IRA, he fell victim to the state he once served. Six month’s gaol for sedition, revocation of his OBE and his marriage in 1921 to Leah Kay, then a CPGB member and subsequently chair of Poale Zion, coincided with a dampening of revolutionary ardour and confirmed the opinions of working-class critics who viewed him at best as a bourgeois interloper, at worst a spy. In 1922, Malone resigned from the CPGB and joined the ILP. He stood unsuccessfully for Labour in the 1924 general election before winning Northampton in 1928 and becoming Private Secretary to the Minister of Pensions in the MacDonald administration. In later life, Malone and Leah were Labour councillors in London.²⁶

He was an example of that fraction of the middle class enthused by 1917 and the prospects it held both for excitement and advancement. Reality sobered them.²⁷ In contrast, another Yorkshireman, Fred Shaw (1881–1951) epitomized the working-class autodidact. His interlude in the CPGB failed to quell his passion for IWCE and it was to that he returned. Almost a decade older than Deer and Malone, born into proletarian respectability in Lindley, near Huddersfield – his father was a foreman in a woollen factory blacksmith’s shop – he was involved in the movement from an early age as an officer of the local Labour Representation Committee (LRC), a member of the SLP and distributor for the American socialist publisher, Charles Kerr. He left school at 12 to work in the woollen industry, qualified as a craftsman and by 1912 was secretary of his branch of the ASE and active in the BSP.²⁸

He served five terms on its executive and was national chair in 1918, the year he stood for the party in Greenock. He was a BSP councillor in Lindley, a member of the

National Committee of the 'Hands Off Russia' movement and staunch advocate of a Communist Party affiliated to Labour. Victimized and blacklisted in the 1922 engineering lockout, he scratched a living from casual work and socialist lectures. Between 1922 and 1924 the CPGB differentiated itself from Labour which reciprocated Communist hostility. Rather than collaborating with the Plebs League and the National Council of Labour Colleges (NCLC), the party not only insisted in training its members in Comintern Marxism but in implanting it in IWCE via Communist 'fractions' prescribing what tutors like Shaw should teach. The NCLC did not react favourably and, like other Communists engaged in workers' education such as Frank and Winifred Horrabin, J.T. Walton Newbold, Raymond Postgate and Mark Starr, Shaw made a choice. In 1923 he left the CPGB and secured a full-time position with the NCLC. Like Deer and Malone, he reflected the waning of the radical wave of 1910–1920 and illustrated the appeal of the mainstream. He spent the rest of his life propagating Marxism in the Labour Party, working as an NCLC organizer, becoming a fixture of the Yorkshire labour movement, and pursuing his preoccupations with drama, castles, telescoping and building wireless sets. In common with other activists he neglected family life and the burden of raising children fell on his wife.²⁹

John Frederick Hodgson (1866–1947), was among the oldest of the cohort and like Shaw, came from the skilled working class. Born in York at the high tide of labour's partnership with the Liberals, he followed his father's craft as a foreman cutter in the wholesale clothing industry. By the 1890s, he had moved south to Reading where he became a mainstay of the SDF/BSP and the Labour Party. A partisan of the anti-war left around the increasingly influential Russian émigré, Theodore Rothstein, he crossed swords with anti-Hyndman leaders like Edwin Fairchild and H.W. Alexander who opposed the Soviet path. 'A calm, cogent, reasoned speaker' (Klugmann, 1966, p.44), he moved a defeated amendment for direct action to halt Allied intervention in Russia as well as an unsuccessful amendment

for affiliation to the Comintern at the 1920 Labour Party conference.³⁰ He enjoyed more success with the resolution that Communists apply for affiliation to Labour, quoting copiously from Lenin, at the 1920 Unity Convention, having played an influential role in the negotiations which preceded it.³¹

Convinced revolutionaries should operate inside Labour, Hodgson had been nominated for its executive and as Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for East Islington.³² He may have been unhappy with the CPGB's application for affiliation, presented in a fashion likely to provoke rejection: as a member of the delegation which met with Labour Party representatives in December 1921, he remained silent.³³ CPGB treasurer at a time of financial disorder, he played little part in its resolution. Bell recalled: 'Hodgson was a good proletarian ... He was head and shoulders above the rest of the BSP leaders, knew his Marx and the British workers' movement' (Bell, 1941, p.191). Why then did he vanish from history in 1922? The answer lies in the domestic sphere. In 1898, as a 32-year old widower with two children, he persuaded 20-year old Anne Holton to live with him, insisting that as an atheist he could not countenance a religious ceremony but 'recognising her as his wife' before witnesses. An unhappy union, punctuated by demands he marry her, deteriorated further when in 1915 her attempted suicide landed the couple in court; he claimed her indulgence in alcohol brought on 'violent hysteria' and she, in turn, accused him of drunkenness. In 1921, he began an affair and left the family home amid mutual recrimination. Holton's consequent breach of promise action attracted widespread publicity; Hodgson was hit by an award of £200 damages and was forced to leave Reading because of 'libellous statements'. He changed his name to Edwin Player, became manager of a clothing company and reconstructed his life in a way which excluded politics.³⁴

The solitary woman on the first EC was more than a decade older than all the above. With experience reaching back to the SDF, Dora Montefiore (1851–1933) stood out in a

party of male workers as a female member of the bourgeoisie. Her father, a Surrey entrepreneur and friend of Prince Albert, ensured that she had a good private education; she emerged fluent in French and German and with a strong social conscience. Relocating to Australia, she married George Barrow Montefiore, a Jewish businessman, and on her return after his death in 1889 became active in the SDF and the suffrage movement. She developed into an accomplished public speaker, journalist and pamphleteer, a published poet who translated Maxim Gorky into English. She served five terms on the SDF executive and that of its successors, attended the 1907 and 1910 Congresses of the Second International, spoke at the gatherings of the Socialist Women's International and preached socialism in Australia and South Africa (Allen, 1986; Hunt, 2001; Montefiore, 1927).

Her alleged affair with a married ILP organizer, George Belt, in 1898–99, attracted odium, while tensions arose from her suffrage activities. She left the BSP around 1912 but remained an advocate of socialism, militancy and industrial unionism: it was Montefiore who devised the scheme to bring tenement children to Britain during the 1913 Dublin lockout, stimulating strident condemnation from the establishment.³⁵ As the anti-war current gained impetus, she returned to the fold and, inspired by the Bolsheviks, championed a united Communist Party. In less than two years in the CPGB, she emphasised the need to appeal to working-class women by publishing a dedicated journal, was involved with the Russian Famine Fund, and represented the CPGB at the French party's foundation. Montefiore returned to Australia in 1922 and was a delegate from her new party at the Fifth Congress of the Comintern in 1924.³⁶

By then the lines of demarcation between Labour and the CPGB had hardened. This did not preclude CPGB activity in local Labour parties; but the chances of Communists being adopted as parliamentary candidates were slim. Confronted by 1924 with a choice between the CPGB and a possible career as an MP, Ferdinand L. Kerran (1883–1949) opted for the

latter, unsuccessfully contesting Hull NW for Labour.³⁷ He was born in Tranmere near Birkenhead, the fourth child and second son of a watchmaker and repairer who owned his own shop. Helmuth Kehrhahn was an immigrant from Dreveskirchen, north Germany; his wife Eliza was born in Yorkshire.³⁸ The family moved to Bexley Heath in Kent, where Ferdinand joined the ILP in 1906 and the Social Democratic Party – the BSP’s short-lived predecessor – in 1908 (Riddell, 2015, p.1223). With his German background and disability (he was a hunchback), life could not have been easy for Kehrhahn who ran a photography publishing business with his brother.³⁹ Despite British citizenship, he was detained from 1915 in Islington Workhouse, temporarily utilized as an internment camp. During his imprisonment, he rubbed shoulders with the Russian exile George Tchitcherine, a supporter of the Bolsheviks in Kentish Town BSP; Maxim Litvinov, a member of Lenin’s faction since 1898, appointed Soviet representative in Britain in 1917 and later Russian Foreign Minister; and Peter Petrov, a friend of John Maclean, prominent in the BSP anti-war faction in London and Scotland.⁴⁰

All three represented the Bolshevik influence in the BSP which crystallized in the role their fellow member, Rothstein, played as a conduit for Soviet policy and finance in facilitating formation of the CPGB. All three were deported, as was Rothstein. But Kehrhahn absconded, made his way to Liverpool and signed on as a trimmer on a ship bound for America. Apprehended in New York, he received six months hard labour in Wormwood Scrubs. Despite further escape attempts and solitary confinement, it was 1919 before he resumed activity after four years’ incarceration.⁴¹ Anglicizing his name to Kerran, in 1919 he married fellow BSP member, Lily Kirchwosky, known as Lily Chris, whose mother, Anne Bloom, a Jewish immigrant from Russia, married the Bethnal Green BSP and later Communist activist, Walter Windsor, who, like his step-son-in-law, quit the CPGB to become a Labour MP.⁴² At the Unity Convention, Kerran spoke in favour of parliamentary action and

affiliation to Labour and represented the CPGB at the Third Congress of the Comintern.

Communists may have permitted themselves a degree of *schadenfreude* at his failure to fulfil his parliamentary ambitions. Describing himself as ‘an economic and political investigator’, he retreated into private life.

Petit-bourgeois by origin, Kerran privileged personal advancement. Willie Kirker (b.1891) came to Communist politics as part of the BSP’s proletarian contingent, his recruitment reflecting the influence John Maclean wielded in the Scottish coalfields. Kirker, like Kerran, parted company with the CPGB in 1924, but in very different circumstances. Born in Penpont, Dumfriesshire, the son of a plasterer, he moved to Bowhill, Fife, a modern village near a new colliery.⁴³ From 1910, Maclean had conducted propaganda ‘crusades’ and Marxist classes there and Kirker became one of ‘the fighting dominie’s’ protégés, active in the Fife union and the miners’ reform movement which campaigned against the conservative union leadership (Campbell, 2000, p.151; Milton, 1973, p.68). After the break with Hyndman, he represented Scotland on the BSP executive. He took a leading part in the 1921 lockout and the following year in establishing the breakaway Fife Mineworkers’ Reform Union, sparked by the manipulations of the leadership of the National Union of Scottish Mineworkers and its Fife affiliate. When Kirker, ‘a solid, dependable, matter of fact local leader not given to stunts and flamboyance’ (MacDougall, 1981, p.66) and a fellow Communist, John Bird, were elected to the national executive, ‘the old gang’ obstructed the latter taking his seat. The new union was launched in January 1923: against the wishes of the CPGB leaders. Kirker followed his own inclinations, became a full-time official and remained an advocate of independence despite pressure from party headquarters.⁴⁴

His career suggested the lure of Labour was far from universal but illustrated that Communism was immune to neither conflicts between politics and trade unionism nor the vicissitudes of working-class life. Money raised its head in Fife as it had in London: in late

1924 an audit disclosed defalcation of union funds. A contemporary remembered: ‘Kirker got into financial difficulties mainly because of his lack of business knowledge and business ability. As he got deeper into difficulties he started to drink and gamble to try to recover money and got deeper into the mire’ (MacDougall, 1981, p.66). Dismissed by the union executive and handed over to the police, he was sentenced to six months in prison.

Revolutionaries, it seemed, had few qualms in applying bourgeois norms – although one Communist reflected: ‘Pity we couldn’t deal with cases such as this without having to rely on the Boss’s courts of “justice”’ (MacDougall, 1981, 193). On his release, Kirker emigrated to Canada, returning, former comrades recollected, to run a boarding house in Aberdeen (MacDougall, 1981, p.67).

For several of the SLP contingent, their brush with Communism also constituted a case of here today and gone tomorrow. Fred Silvester (1872–1934) came from a white-collar background in the Midlands. In the world of Disraeli, Gladstone and Lib-Labism, his father was an officer of the school board and he himself became clerk to the county court in Birmingham.⁴⁵ The secretary of Birmingham SLP and one of the older charter members of the CPGB, he ‘found it unsuitable as a vehicle for his views’ (Barnsby, 1998, p.551; Parker, 2018, p.78). But like others, the author of *Working-Class Ballads, Songs and Poems* remained active in the labour movement when he quit the party in 1922, finding IWCE and the Labour Party superior instruments for developing socialist ideas and action. In the mid-1920s he was chair of Birmingham Labour College and a leading light in the Moseley Labour Party. Silvester regarded the Labour Party in Leninist terms as ‘a reformist organization led by leaders with a bourgeois conception of the state and democracy.’⁴⁶ With many former Communists, he believed activity within it provided the best opportunity for regrouping the left in a more plural formation than the CPGB offered. From 1923 he worked with CPGBers such as Robert Dunstan and ILPers around Joseph Southall to establish a left alliance in

Birmingham. By the time the National Left-Wing Movement (NWLM) was launched in 1926, the Birmingham group included representatives from 10 Labour Party organizations, the ILP, several unions and the NCLC. Silvester remained active in the NWLM to the end, protesting the CPGB decision to wind up the national organization in 1929 (Barnsby, 1998, pp.548–562; Parker, 2018, pp.77–79). His vision of a Labour Party transformed into a united front of the working class, affiliating all tendencies remained unfulfilled.

Like the BSP, if on a smaller scale, the SLP had its share of labour aristocrats and small capitalists, such as the Lancashire businessmen, Dick Hutchinson and W. R. Stoker. Alfred Egbert Cook (b.1891), based in Cardiff, owned shops with an annual turnover of £6,000 – a not inconsiderable sum at the time. He joined the SLP around 1910 and devoted considerable time to IWCE classes as well as writing on Marxist economics in the socialist press.⁴⁷ He opposed the war, invoking a party rule prohibiting members joining the armed forces and avoided the draft, working as manager of the SLP's printing operations and liaising with Bell, the editor of the *Socialist* (Bell, 1941, p.174).⁴⁸ He was arrested, brought before the magistrates and handed over to the authorities. Court-martialled in September 1918, he was sentenced to six months hard labour in Wormwood Scrubs. He expressed the sentiments of those who refused to serve. The war, he declared, 'is the result of the clashing of the varying interests of economic groups of industrial oligarchs ... the workers of all lands have an identity of interest and one commonality ... an injury to one is an injury to all ... I cannot end Imperialism and Militarism by opposing it in Germany and supporting it here ... I am a socialist internationalist holding that the goal of humanity is the achievement of universal brotherhood.'⁴⁹

At his court martial, he affirmed 'I am for the achievement of the worldwide Socialist Republic',⁵⁰ and on his release in 1919 turned his efforts to achieving it. He welcomed the CUG, opposed the expulsion from the SLP of those who signed its manifesto and resigned in

solidarity with the Cardiff branch which was working towards a united Communist Party.⁵¹ Enrolling in it at the 1920 Unity Convention, he campaigned to bring the remnants of the SWSS into the new organization. He criticised initiatives to form an anti-parliamentarian South Wales Communist Party, arguing for a 'centralised, disciplined, national Communist Party [to] connect South Wales rebel activities with those of the rest of the country. This work a localised Welsh organization cannot do.'⁵² Whether he revised his views on parliament and the Labour Party in the interests of centralization and discipline remains unclear. He was appointed to work full-time in the party's Electoral Department at a salary of £5 a week but recommended for removal from the payroll by the 1922 Organization Commission.⁵³ Thereafter the record is silent.

Like Cook and Silvester, Patrick Lavin (b.1881), a sometime miner of Irish extraction, was an autodidact whose love of learning found expression in IWCE classes and endeavours in collaboration with John Maclean to create a Scottish Labour College on a full-time basis.⁵⁴ He had a gift for languages – he translated Lenin and parts of Bukharin and Preobrazhensky's *ABC of Communism* for the SLP. He was also involved in the Glasgow-based, Comintern subsidized Socialist Information and Research Bureau and a prolific contributor to the *Socialist* and the *Worker* on Ireland and international issues.⁵⁵ Such qualifications fitted him for elevation to the EC at a time when the CPGB was attempting to formulate its stance in regard to the Plebs League and the emerging NCLC. His stay was short. Having lost his paid post as secretary of the Scottish Labour College (SLC), he was despatched to Moscow in December 1921 to stand in for Bell as CPGB representative to the Comintern.⁵⁶ He subsequently spent an unhappy period working as a translator for the Young Communist International in Berlin, in what he termed 'a hostile environment'. Conflicts crystallized around cash: non-payment of an agreed allowance to his wife, who remained in Lanarkshire, prompted his resignation from the CPGB in 1923 on grounds of 'alleged mistreatment'.⁵⁷

A number of EC members from the smaller founding organizations had quit the party by mid-decade. Edgar Thoreau Whitehead (1890–1956), the secretary of the CP-BSTI, revealed himself as an adventurer. Born in Venice, Italy, to parents who described themselves as seamen’s missionaries, general dealers and shopkeepers, he was educated at Verdin Technical School, Winsford, Witton Grammar School and St Paul’s College, Cheltenham, graduating from London University in 1910. After travel in Europe, Whitehead, a keen ornithologist, returned to England in 1914, opposed the war as a conscientious objector, and served a prison term.⁵⁸ Believing Britain to be on the brink of revolution, he cut his political teeth as secretary of the tiny, pro-Bolshevik Labour Abstentionist Party (LAP) which adopted what he termed a Sinn Fein position, standing for parliament but refusing to participate if elected, a stance arguably inspired by Guy Aldred and commended by Tom Mann. With other groupuscules, the LAP came together with the WSF in summer 1920 to establish the CP-BSTI, which declared itself for the Comintern but against parliamentary action. Despite this contradiction, the group entered the CPGB in January 1921 and accepted Moscow’s ‘21 conditions’ which governed affiliation to the Comintern and required national sections to model themselves on the Bolsheviks. Having quarrelled with Pankhurst, Whitehead failed to challenge her expulsion and remained in the CPGB when she launched the short-lived Communist Workers’ Party (CWP) in 1922 (Jones, 1991; Shipway, 1988, pp.12–14, 79–80; Wilmslow, 1996, pp.141, 164–165, 168).

He represented the CPGB in discussions with European parties, worked for the Comintern in Berlin and in administering Russian Famine Relief, visiting Scandinavia, America and Russia, where he contracted typhus in Tsariban. On one account, he availed himself of the general disarray: ‘Whitehead with his wicked associations with women and wine in Berlin is worse than an incompetent [he] is also living on the Famine Fund’.⁵⁹ The erstwhile anti-parliamentarian developed parliamentary ambitions, unsuccessfully seeking

nomination as a Labour candidate and in 1924 passed out of the CPGB.⁶⁰ Labour failed to satisfy his aspirations and Whitehead moved right, decisively after he left his wife for a Russian émigré, Sophia Voznesensky, who became a British citizen as Sophia Bray. Swapping his name for hers, he joined the British Union of Fascists. Mosley in his turn failed to live up to Bray's hopes and Hitler's Germany assumed the place Lenin's Russia once held in his affections. In 1939, he offered his services to the German embassy as a propagandist and was in touch with Nazi agents. The Brays joined a fake spy ring established by MI5 to confound German intelligence. Never prosecuted, he ended his life as an accountant in the London suburbs.⁶¹

The death of his comrade, Thomas Joseph Watkins (1884–1924), coincided with Whitehead's exit from the CPGB. The contrast between them highlights the polarities which existed even within the founding groups. From a coalmining family in Mountain Ash, Glamorgan, Watkins worked at Bedwas Colliery, living in nearby Trethomas, a few miles from Caerphilly.⁶² His political anchorage was the South Wales Miners' Unofficial Reform Committee, established in 1911, which came out of the Cambrian Combine strike and the syndicalism of *The Miners' Next Step*. During the war, Watkins was active in the South Wales Socialist Society and in preparing a post-war manifesto for the Reform Committee.⁶³ In the summer of 1920, the South Wales movement remained localised, fragmented and disputatious and Watkins represented only the tiny Trethomas CUG at the Unity Convention. He opposed links with Labour: in the colliery meetings he had attended over ten years, he remarked, the issue of the Labour Party had never arisen. It was not necessary to join it to reach the rank and file. He concluded: 'If I had not been an anti-parliamentarian before coming to the convention, the mover of the resolution would have made me one ... so long as we use a weapon as obsolete as parliament we are not going to bring satisfaction to the working class.'⁶⁴ Unhappy with the positions adopted, he declined to join the CPGB. In

September 1920, he chaired the Cardiff meeting addressed by Whitehead which explored the possibility of uniting the fragments in South Wales. Like the majority there, he decided the CP-BSTI was the best bet and became its treasurer. Within weeks he was out of work, victimized by the management at Bedwas for irregular attendance.⁶⁵ He joined the CPGB with the CP-BSTI, but Pankhurst's expulsion confirmed his doubts and after the failure of the CWP he dropped out of party politics. Until his death in 1924 he remained engaged in the unemployed workers' movement in his new home in Neath.⁶⁶

William Mellor (1888–1942) left in 1924 but the similarities end there. Cut from different cloth than Watkins or Whitehead, Mellor was an intellectual attracted by 1917 who proved unable to accept exclusion from the labour movement mainstream. He chafed against the constraints and declining prospects of British Bolshevism and found a political home on the Labour left. His father was a Unitarian clergyman and he spent his youth in a religious atmosphere in the railway town of Crewe where contact with workers bred the lifelong conviction that he understood their mentality and could help ameliorate their condition. Passing from Willaston Grammar School in Cheshire to Exeter College, Oxford, he joined the University Fabian Society and the ILP, shed his religious faith and fell under the influence of G.D.H. Cole. He worked for the Labour Research Department and the *Daily Herald*, was active in the National Guilds League, and authored pamphlets, notably *Direct Action*. A conscientious objector arrested and court-martialled as an absentee, he served six months in Wormwood Scrubs before agreeing to 'alternative service'. Appointed industrial editor of the *Herald* in 1919, he discarded Cole's 'Fabian muzzle' and Bolshevism replaced Christianity in his soul. He played a prominent role in the CPGB's first years, allegedly influencing MacManus and incurring the wrath of critics by demanding staff be paid professional salaries.⁶⁷

Unlike most Communists, he enjoyed a private income – augmented by his wife, Helen Thompson, the daughter of a prosperous Liverpool master brass founder – and had a career beyond the party. Falling from favour in the CPGB, he prioritized its pursuit. Weeks after its creation, Mellor observed: ‘the watchword of the newly founded Communist Party must be loyalty ... loyalty to the aims we have set before us ... above all to the will of the Party.’⁶⁸ By 1924, he thought differently. Citing what he saw as the Communists’ overly critical attitude to Labour’s leaders, he resigned in the aftermath of unsuccessful attempts to secure Comintern funds for the *Herald*.⁶⁹ Appointed editor but dismissed in 1931, he stood for Parliament on the Labour ticket and was prominent in the Socialist League. An early advocate of the popular frontist Unity Campaign of the late 1930s, he edited *Tribune*, launched as its mouthpiece. His enthusiasm for Soviet policy subsided, and Stafford Cripps replaced him with the crypto-Stalinist H.M. Hartshorn. Ending an affair with the young Barbara Castle, he returned to his wife and the *Herald* (Corthorn, 2006; Pimlott, 1977). Remembered as ‘a big, well-built, dark-haired man ... with a great interest in cricket; also something of a *bon viveur*... an excellent speaker and propagandist’ (Cole, 1973, p.126), Mellor died in 1942 after an operation for ulcers.

Jack Braddock (1892–1963) had little time for intellectuals, pseudo or otherwise. His father was a pottery worker who became a school board inspector in Hanley. The family was comfortably-off until his father’s death in 1907. Forced to leave school, he worked in a draper’s shop before completing an apprenticeship as a wagon builder. Employed by a railway company in Liverpool from 1915, he was active in the ILP, established a branch of the IWW, and formed a lifelong partnership with Bessie Bamber (1899–1970), the daughter of Mary ‘Ma’ Bamber, well-known socialist councillor, shop workers’ organizer and proselytizer for women’s rights. With Jack’s brother Wilf, all were founder members of the CPGB. There is no record of Braddock campaigning against the war but he was prominent in

the post-war unemployed agitation, acquitted in 1923 of possessing guns intended for the IRA and frequently out of work and blacklisted.⁷⁰ As a member of the CPGB Control Commission, he protested the absence of democratic oversight over allocation of Russian gold, chaotic regulation of party finances, appointment of too many paid officials and the perks of leading functionaries. Dissatisfaction mingled with antipathy to democratic centralism and depleted local autonomy. Faced with disciplinary action, the Braddocks quit in summer 1924.⁷¹ Like many who evacuated the CPGB in the early 1920s, he came from a left which saw Bolshevism as the best chance for working-class progress. Like others, he recoiled on discovering what it entailed and rebounded to reformism. His syndicalism left little trace and he became a pillar of Liverpool Labour while working as an insurance agent. By the late 1940s he was leader of the party group on the City Council and in 1955 headed Liverpool's first Labour administration. It was a position he occupied until his death. Bessie was elected MP for Liverpool Exchange in 1945 and in the succeeding decade left-wing attempts to unseat her reinforced the couple's drift to anti-Communism. A lifelong teetotaler, Braddock died of a heart attack at a public function in 1963 (Davies, 2004).

His fellow IWW veteran, Dick Beech (1892–1955), maintained a lengthier commitment to syndicalism. Having broken with the CPGB, he was the only member of this group of defectors who re-joined it. Raised in Hull by an English father and Irish mother from Banbridge, County Down, Beech, 'a huge man some 6ft 3ins tall', became a seafarer, sailing to Australia and America where he enrolled in the IWW in Colorado and participated in strikes in Oregon logging camps.⁷² During the war, he and his brother Charlie were seamen on the Liverpool-America run – twice torpedoed – and members of the North London IWW group and later the WSF. Inspired by the Bolsheviks, he attended the Second Congress of the Comintern in summer 1920 as an IWW delegate. Convinced by Lenin's argument that the differences between syndicalism and Bolshevism were insufficient to exclude him, he

entered the CPGB with the CP-BSTI. By 1922, he was recorded as attempting to form a branch of Pankhurst's CWP in Hull (Beech, 1943; Martin, 1969, pp.6, 9; Weller, 1985, pp.64–65; Wilmslow, 1996, p.176).⁷³

He found his way back to the CPGB via the Minority Movement (MM). Through involvement with the Irish republican left, he met, and in 1925 married, Moira, James Connolly's daughter; like many Communists, he secured employment with the Soviet company, Russian Oil Products (ROP). Together with Tom Strudwick, a fellow official of the Transport Workers MM, and Pollitt, he was involved in a well-publicized libel case over articles in the movement's paper, *The Seafarer*. In the aftermath of police raids on Arcos, the Russian trading concern, he was dismissed by ROP, allegedly over agitation for better conditions and recruiting members into the Drug and Chemical Workers Union.⁷⁴ Discontent with the CPGB, fanned by contact with Trotskyist oppositionists in RILU's Seamen's International, he developed his wider interests – he was a prolific short story writer – by establishing the Progressive and Cooperative Bookshop Society. Intended to create retail outlets and a publishing house, its only concrete embodiment was a bookshop in Fleet Street, from where he contacted the Trotskyist Communist League of America, imported its literature, contributed to its press and engaged in discussions about establishing a sister group in Britain. He was expelled from the CPGB but played no further part in British Trotskyism and according to surveillance reports made unsuccessful attempts to return to the party. Beech ended up working for the Chemical Workers' Union, joined the ILP during the war and, like so many of his former comrades, passed over to the Labour Party.⁷⁵

The Abertillery coalminer, Will Hewlett (1876–1921) represented another link between Communism and syndicalism. Commencing working life in the era of the fight against collaborative trade unionism and the creation of the SWMF in 1898, he campaigned for reform of the industry and the Federation during the Cambrian Combine strike and was

one of the group of syndicalists who established the Unofficial Reform Committee in March 1911. When Noah Ablett, Will Hay and Bill Mainwaring drafted *The Miners' Next Step*, they sent a copy to Hewlett whose comments informed the final version of the influential manifesto (Edwards, 1938, p.70; Egan, 1996; Holton, 1976, pp.84–85).⁷⁶ Relatively unusually in Wales, he became a member of the SLP; its ethos expressed his commitment to industrial unionism, anti-parliamentarianism, suspicion of Labour, distrust of officialdom and dedication to Marxist education. With fellow SLP members, Ness Edwards and Will John Edwards, he pioneered IWCE across South-East Wales, acting as secretary of the Workers' Democratic Education League and later the Central Labour College League. Educational endeavour, he insisted must be integrated with trade union action (Lewis, 1993, pp.114–115, 126). Working with the CUG, he was instrumental in creating the South Wales Communist Council as a successor to the South Wales Socialist Society and bridge to a unified Communist Party. He joined the CPGB at the 1920 convention despite his antipathy to Labour: 'I was keenly hoping that any thought of Labour Party affiliation would have been turned down in no uncertain manner. I fail to synchronise the contradiction i.e. the affiliation to the Second and the Third International, still I contend the conference was a good one.'⁷⁷ He was subsequently active in preparing the launch of the BBRILU and working towards SWMF affiliation. He attended the Third Comintern Congress and the Founding Congress of RILU in Moscow in summer 1921 and died in a railway accident while visiting the mines at Tula (Bell, 1941, pp.228–229; Klugmann, 1966, pp. 21, 34, 109). The bodies of Hewlett and other victims lay in state for three days in the Great Hall of Columns; flanked by a guard of honour of the Red Army and RILU delegations, he was buried near the Kremlin Wall.⁷⁸

Denouncing intellectual birds of passage, Bell (1941, p.191) remarked that they 'had only been caught up in the surge of the new movement. In reality they never belonged to it.' A harsh verdict but one which might equally apply to some proletarians. Hewlett's fellow

SLPer, Alexander McGeachan (1888–1962), son of a Glasgow baker, was a driller at the Singer factory in Clydebank at the time of the famous 1911 IWGB strike. Unemployed in 1920, he agitated in the twin ship-building and engineering towns of Greenock and Gourock and enrolled in the CLP. His activity in the unemployed movement and BBRILU saw him elected to the CPGB EC in May 1922; but he never figured subsequently on the committee or as a party activist.⁷⁹ The CLP contributed few members – and, with the exception of Gallacher, and perhaps J.R. Campbell, no longstanding leaders, to the CPGB – and its representatives have left few traces.⁸⁰ Joseph McDonald was in the orbit of John Maclean and the SLP before becoming a member of the CLP committee and in January 1921 a member of the CPGB EC. He played no further recorded role.⁸¹ ‘John McLean of Bridgeton’ figures in the historiography because of possible confusion with his more significant namesake; apart from his association with the CLP, the literature tells us nothing about him.⁸² Born in Glasgow in 1891, his father was an Irish Presbyterian blacksmith and engine driver and he became a factory labourer active in the SLP and the Scottish Workers’ Committee.⁸³ Anarcho-syndicalist sympathies pushed him towards the Glasgow anarchist, Guy Aldred. McLean supported the Communist League formed in March 1919 by a handful of SLP branches and bodies such as Aldred’s Glasgow Communist Group – the WSF was also affiliated (Shipway, 1988, pp.11–12). The following year he led the Parkhead Communist Group, again associated with Aldred, emerging as secretary of the CLP.⁸⁴ ‘A convinced anti-parliamentarian’, he resigned from the CPGB EC in 1921 although it is unclear whether this also involved resignation from the party.⁸⁵

Little is known of J.W. Pratt (b.1876), an EC member in 1921 and 1922. A search of the socialist press identified a single J.W. Pratt, the animator of the North London Clarion Esperanto Group who resided in Stoke Newington. The 1911 census reveals him as John William Pratt, a printers’ compositor.⁸⁶ The publicising of his activities in *Justice* may imply

an affinity with the SDF and the affiliation of the *Clarion* clubs to the BSP on its formation in 1912 suggests he may have been a member of that organization. After leaving the EC in 1922, he returned to relative anonymity, although he reappears as a London representative of the British Esperanto Association in 1927.⁸⁷

Returned to the ranks

A second group elected to the EC relinquished their leading positions but remained Communists beyond the mid-1920s. Alfred Augustus Watts (1862–1928) was the oldest male from the BSP. A printer at the apex of the labour aristocracy, born within the sound of Bow Bells six years before the first TUC, he entered his twenties on the eve of radical developments in trade unionism and socialism. A leading member of the London Society of Compositors who practised his craft as an overseer at the SDF's Twentieth Century Press, he served seven terms on the executive of the SDF and its successors and represented it on the LRC. Credited with winning George Lansbury to the cause, he stood at the heart of socialist East London. A member of the Poplar Board of Guardians and local councillor, he parted company with Hyndman in 1916 and subsequently with Fairchild and Alexander (Bush, 1984, pp.58, 76–77; Crick, 1994, pp.165–166; Kendall, 1969, p.306).

By 1918 Watts was urging, 'it ought to be made perfectly clear that we of the BSP back up entirely the Bolshevik movement' and insisting 'no minor points of detail or tactics [should] stand in the way of the complete unification of the left-wing organizations in a United Communist Party' (Kendall, 1969, pp.179, 229). Whether he had any inkling of the form that party would take remains unclear. He remarked with prescience: 'We want no bureaucratic substitute for capitalism under which the workers will be more of a servile and exploited class than now. This is a danger ahead which can only be avoided by the clearly expressed demand for democratic control of industry.'⁸⁸ Suspicious of state socialism and

inspired by the shop stewards' movement, Watts placed his faith in soviets, assimilated them to workers' committees and neglected their demise in Russia. As a Communist in local government, he gave credence to accusations that BSP activists 'accepted departmental office and became part of the administrative machinery of capitalism,' coming under fire for implementing cuts in poor relief and summoning the police to clear protesters.⁸⁹ Reduced to the ranks after 1921, he combined Labour Party work with managing the CPGB bookshop. His allegiance survived dramatic change in Russia and Britain; on his death in 1928, not only the CPGB but the Labour Party acknowledged 'years of steady, ungrudging work'.⁹⁰

A decade younger, Frederick George Willis (1873–1947) started work during the pioneering days of British Marxism and the 'New Unionism'. An SDFer from the 1890s – he stood unsuccessfully for the executive in 1898 – later active in the BSP and Labour Party in Willesden, North-West London, he was a stalwart of the anti-war majority.⁹¹ As editor of the *Call* after Fairchild's resignation, and in receipt of Russian funds distributed by Rothstein, he campaigned for a unified Communist Party. For Willis, soviets represented a potentially universal form of democracy whose seeds could be found in trades councils and strike committees; he was an enthusiastic advocate for 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'. 'What', he inquired, 'could a 'reconstructed Second International offer but the empty phrases and shattered ideals of yesterday? Compare this with the positive achievements of the Third International born of a revolution.'⁹² A delegate to the Amsterdam conference of the Comintern, he was prominent in the unity negotiations, advocating Labour Party affiliation and commending what he questionably termed the BSP's 'destructive role' in the reformist organization.⁹³

He was the first editor of the *Communist*. We can only imagine his thoughts when replaced by the Catholic intellectual, Francis Meynell. 'The BSP', Willis had boasted, 'was a party uncontaminated by the devastating influence of intellectual patronage , resting entirely

on the working class.’⁹⁴ A casualty of competition for jobs, he found a berth at King Street in charge of publishing, a post he filled without great success.⁹⁵ By 1922, he was a cashier in ‘a key position checking illegitimate expenditure’ with the Russian concerns Arcos and ROP.⁹⁶ He remained active through the 1920s in the City of London CPGB group which consisted of Soviet employees, was a Congress delegate and, in 1927–1928, a member of the Control Commission. His dismissal from the Russian institutions in 1928 coincided with his making himself unavailable for nomination for 1929, at which point he disappears from the narrative.⁹⁷

Like Watts, although a little younger, Joseph Vaughan (1878–1938) became a fixture of East End Communism. His career affirms it was possible to break with the BSP-Labourism on which he was weaned for, unlike Watts, he remained active through the Comintern’s ultra-left Third Period. Brought up in Mile End New Town, the son of a craftsman, he worked from the age of 8 and left school at 13 for a job as a builder’s labourer before serving an apprenticeship as an electrician. He experienced transformations in the working class: the father was a Victorian wood carver, the son worked with the twentieth century’s most advanced technology.⁹⁸ Influenced by an old Chartist, Vaughan supported the Liberals before joining the SDF. Active in the ETU and the Bethnal Green Trades Council and Central Labour Party, by 1915 he was President of the Trades Council and a conscientious objector. Proclaiming himself an international socialist who believed ‘all wars were in the interests of the profit mongers ... the Bethnal Green Tribunal which had turned a deaf ear to many identical pleas, granted him “non-combatant service” without a murmur.’⁹⁹ A partisan of the Bolsheviks since 1917, he entered the CPGB with a unique status as Mayor of Bethnal Green, the BSP asserting ‘he really does succeed in giving dignity to a title which the little bourgeois prigs have succeeded in making ridiculous.’¹⁰⁰ As an official Labour candidate for Bethnal Green South-West in the 1922 and 1923 general elections, he was

narrowly defeated but standing as a Communist in 1924 did even better (Klugmann, 1966, pp.235, 262, 368). That year he assisted the German party in its election campaign.¹⁰¹ Unlike other members of this group, Vaughan enjoyed a fleeting return to the leadership – he was briefly co-opted to the party’s Organising Bureau during the emergency occasioned by the arrest of 12 Communist leaders in 1925 (Klugmann, 1969, p.362). As Labour’s attitude to Communism hardened, the Bethnal Green Labour Parties became leading lights in the NLWM. But by 1928 disaffiliations had taken their toll. The new ethos was encapsulated in the re-normalised nomenclature of the Lenin Estate, named by Vaughan in tribute to the Bolshevik leader, and his reduced vote in the 1931 general election (Parker, 2018, pp.73–76). He stood for the ETU executive in 1917, secured affiliation of the London District to RILU, campaigned for the MM and contested elections for General Secretary and President through the 1920s, although blacklisting ensured he rarely worked at the trade. Vaughan was finally expelled from the ETU in 1938, on the eve of Communist advance in the union (Lloyd, 1990, p. 164, 214, 221, 236).

His fellow BSP activist, Fred Peet (1890–1951) was born in Bethnal Green a decade after Vaughan in the year after the dockers’ strike ushered in the ‘New Unionism’. He, too, came from a craft background – his father was a piano maker and Peet a salesman in medical supplies.¹⁰² His Communist cousin described him as ‘typical of the bright intelligent young working men of Edwardian days who formed the backbone of Socialist parties.’¹⁰³ A lover of music hall and opera, a talented amateur entertainer, he graduated from youthful jingoism around the Boer War to internationalism in 1914. Peet joined the BSP, became a conscientious objector and did time in Wormwood Scrubs.¹⁰⁴ By 1919, he was contributing to the *Call* and secretary of the South Islington branch. The following year he served as secretary of the London ‘Hands Off Russia Committee’ and was active in launching the CPGB. A ‘backroom boy’ in the Inkpin mould, he managed the party’s King Street

headquarters and acted as secretary when Inkpin was gaoled in 1921. Engaged in securing Soviet subsidies, including journeying to Scandinavia to buttonhole the Comintern representative, he was taken off the payroll after the 1922 report.¹⁰⁵ He went into the dressmaking business but was still a party member when he visited Moscow in 1925. Thereafter, he fell away and, on one account, by the end of the 1930s, afflicted by business problems and family difficulties, took to the bottle. He submitted to the world he once aspired to change, reflecting, 'I just play the cards fate deals me.'¹⁰⁶ Peet died in 1951.

'Johnny' Bird (1896–1964) was the youngest of the BSP group who stuck with the CPGB through the decade. A world away from Bethnal Green, his career similarly illustrated the salience of locality and community in socialist politics. It underlined the pressure trade unionism exercised on militants: for Bird, industrial activity usually took precedence over the BSP and CPGB. Born in the shale mining town of West Calder, Midlothian, he was a favourite of his parents and John Maclean, who worked with Kirker at Bowhill Colliery and in the Miners' Reform Committee.¹⁰⁷ As Fife lost its European coal markets after 1914, conscription loomed and Maclean arranged for his protégé to move to South Wales where he lodged with Arthur Cook. On his return, he continued to support the Reform Movement and studied full-time at the SLC (MacDougall, 1981, p.37). Victimized after the 1921 lockout during which he served a 3-month jail sentence, he was prominent in the breakaway Reform Union but resigned from its executive over allegations he claimed additional expenses when attending an MM conference. Blacklisted in 1926, he was employed as a checkweighman – appointed by the workers to check the weight of coal where it was a factor in calculating wages – a post he vacated on the grounds he had lost the miners' confidence. (MacDougall, 1981, pp.195, 167–70, n.10). He was involved in the skirmishing which preceded the declaration of a second breakaway union, the Communist-inspired United Mineworkers of Scotland but took little part in it. A good speaker, able propagandist and, in the coalfield, 'a

force to be reckoned with', Bird was an extrovert and a dandy. In contrast to the sober attire most miners favoured, he sported 'light-coloured, well-cut clothes: no tie but rather bows or fancy shirts. He would always have some glittering badge in his button-hole' (MacDougall, 1981, pp.37–38). Flamboyance and individualism prompted problems with the party and by 1930 the *Daily Worker* pronounced that he had passed over to reformism.¹⁰⁸ Like Peet, he sought no alternative haven and became a pub landlord and later a sub-postmaster.

At the other end of the age spectrum, George Fletcher (1879–1958) was a year younger than Vaughan. A solid stayer, he spent most of his career as a community politician in Sheffield. Another representative of the 'small shopkeeper and craftsman' strain in the BSP, his father owned a shoemaker's business. Fletcher completed an apprenticeship and, after working as a journeyman baker, established his own enterprise. He joined the SDF in 1902 when he was 23 and spent 56 years as a revolutionary. Running his shop, campaigning for socialism in the Bakers' Union and acting as secretary of Sheffield SDF, he became a familiar figure who moved from opposing compulsory military service and membership of the No Conscription Fellowship to declaring war against war (Connole, 1961, pp.1–75). He was a delegate to both Unity Conventions and the Founding Congress of the MM at which he was elected treasurer. He demonstrated lifelong loyalty to the CPGB in a region where Labour was dominant. Spanning Hyndman, Stalin and Khrushchev, the Communism of this unlikely dogmatist was a family affair, shared with his wife, Kate, and son, George (Martin, 1993). A comrade described him as 'the most peculiar of his profession that ever baked a loaf of bread. He was heavily built and had flat feet. Yet when the unemployed marched from Sheffield to London, he marched with them, shared their hardships on the march and must have suffered agonies with his feet. He was happy by nature, a bonny fighter for the "cause" and a fine comrade' (Murphy, 1941, p.179).

William Paul (1884–1958) was perhaps the most significant of the former EC members from the SLP who remained in the CPGB beyond 1929. Together with MacManus and Bell, he took the lead in liaising with the Comintern, forming the CUG and pushing for unity. He stood out as a thinker, aspiring theoretician and author of *The State: Its Origin and Function* (Paul, 1917; Hinton, 1973, p. 47). ‘An imposing, classically handsome man and an impressive speaker’, he was dedicated but personable. He ‘possessed a good baritone voice and was consequently in demand at socials where he would sing “England Arise” by Edward Carpenter and old Chartist songs’ (Rowbotham, 1986, p.15). He was passionate about IWCE and prominent in the Plebs League. He came from the Glasgow working class but his background was not conventionally proletarian: his father was a storekeeper in a firm of wine merchants and later a jewellery salesman, while Paul himself worked at a jewellers before becoming a self-styled ‘painter/artist’.¹⁰⁹ He joined the SLP shortly after its foundation and devoted much of his time to politics. As SLP national organizer, he extended its reach across England and Wales and with the advent of war edited the *Socialist* and helped develop the shop stewards’ movement (Bell, 1941, pp.68, 123; Hinton, 1973, p.216; Macfarlane, 1966, pp.25, 29, 113–118; Rowbotham, 1986). Mixing enterprise with politics, he established a hosiery business based at his home in Littleover, Derbyshire, went on the run to evade conscription and completed *The State* in the British Museum. He was instrumental in the collective thinking which identified soviets with the workers’ committees developed by the NSS&WCM as the germ of proletarian power. The break with syndicalist conceptions of industrial unions acting as the bridge from capitalism towards socialism complemented the CUG’s organizational rupture with the SLP.¹¹⁰

His candidature in the 1918 khaki election at Rusholme, Manchester, showcased revolutionary socialism. He was selected to state the case against engagement with parliament at the 1920 Convention, visited Russia in connection with Comintern subsidies

and ably defended the politics of the infant party.¹¹¹ Between 1921 and 1923, he edited the *Communist Review*, although it is difficult to see him as ‘one of the dominant figures during [the CPGB’s] first few years’ (Macfarlane, 1966, p.28). He soon dropped into the second echelon, active in Labour Party work and editing the *Sunday Worker*, the Comintern-subsidized and CPGB-controlled weekly initiated to bring Labour’s left to Communism. But he was supervised, and replaced before the project was wound up in 1929.¹¹² It was his last important role, although, like Fletcher, he remained active locally, a lifelong loyalist, immune to the lure of reformism, whose allegiance survived 1956. He embodied the transformation 1917 wrought on British revolutionaries and the subordination of the democratic strand of ‘socialism from below’ to the policies of the Russian state. In 1920 he opposed the orientation to parliament and the Labour Party, observing British socialists needed neither religion nor a political Vatican; British questions must be decided in Britain.¹¹³ Thereafter, he practised what he had preached against.¹¹⁴ His career was intertwined with the defeat and decline of pre-1920 communism and the degeneration of 1917. The Russian Leviathan’s suppression of workers and demotion of international revolution passed him by and he deferred to dogma and dogmatists.¹¹⁵

If Paul’s time as a Communist leader was confined to the 1920s, his fellow SLP member, Owen Marriott Ford (1882–1977), one of the few miners to join at its foundation, quit the CPGB by the end of the decade. Born in Gleadless near Sheffield, he moved to Warsop in the Nottinghamshire coalfield and became a hewer, a member of the underground workers’ aristocracy, at Welbeck Colliery.¹¹⁶ Formed in an era of miners’ struggles and growing antagonism to the war, he joined the SLP around 1918, influenced generally by the Russian revolution and the possibility of a British repetition, and more specifically by Jack Lavin (1880–1919), a university-educated Irishman who had become a member of the IWW and SLP in the USA before returning to Britain and finding work at Welbeck. Ford and Lavin

formed a branch of the SLP which via the CUG entered the CPGB in 1920 (Griffin, 1962, pp.38–39). Appointed Midlands organizer, Ford succumbed to illness shortly after taking up the position.¹¹⁷ He was elected a checkweighman at Welbeck. However, in 1927, in the aftermath of the 1926 lockout and the rise of the breakaway non-political union, led by George Spencer, the coal owners locked out and subsequently dismissed Welbeck miners, including the checkweighmen, who refused to accept reduced rates and membership of the Spencer union. Consigned to the dole queue, he was forced to find work outside the industry (Griffin, 1962, pp. 211, 223–225, 236).

His successor as Midlands organizer, Jack Villiers Leckie (b.1887), was a 33-year old engineering worker with an already rich experience of life and politics when the CPGB was formed. Hailing from Maybole, Ayrshire, the illegitimate child of an Irish republican shoemaker, he worked at a variety of jobs before emigrating to America in 1914, finding employment as a machinist and ‘physical instructor’ and enrolling in the IWW.¹¹⁸ Returning to Scotland at the end of World War I, he became active in the Scottish Workers’ Committee and was secretary of the Clyde Workers’ Defence Committee which supported those imprisoned in the 40-hours strike in 1919. Leckie emerged as a leader of the powerfully anti-parliamentarian Fife Communist League, reported to have groups in Bowhill, Cowdenbeath, Glencraig, Kirkcaldy and Lochgelly. Convinced of the approach of revolution and striving to dovetail defiance in Scotland with the struggle in Ireland, he was described as a ‘physical force anarchist and ardent antiparliamentarian who breathes dynamite and talks red armies. Has been in America and knows all about the IWW. Some guy, believe me!’¹¹⁹ In 1920, the League joined the CLP and that body, which Leckie chaired, entered the CPGB at the January 1921 Congress.¹²⁰ Mothballing insurrectionist ideas, he remade himself as a colourful but politically conventional Communist. He left Coventry on secondment to the German party, spending considerable time in a country he may have found politically more

convivial. Recalled to become secretary of the Workers' International Relief, Leckie was still active at the end of the decade, standing unsuccessfully for the CPGB at Dunfermline Burghs in the 1929 general election. In light of his experience with the German Red Front Fighters, the party gave him responsibility for organizing a Workers' Defence Force, intended to protect pickets from police attack, and the last we hear of him was his arrest during a strike in 1930.¹²¹

A more down-to-earth character, George Shillitoe (1882–1948), together with the transplanted Welshman, Nat Watkins, made up the Yorkshire Miners' contingent on early ECs. A coal hewer from Castleford, he never re-appeared on the EC after 1922 but continued as a party organizer in Yorkshire.¹²² William McKie (b.1876) followed a similar path. An Edinburgh tinsmith who worked in a biscuit factory, he was born in Carlisle, the son of a railway signalman. The secretary of the CPGB Edinburgh branch in 1920, he stayed with the party after leaving the EC and was a delegate to the 1925 Congress.¹²³ Another ephemeral EC member, James Cameron (b.1892), an unemployed engineer, was the first secretary of the Wallsend-on-Tyne branch of the CPGB in Newcastle. He came from Ryton, County Durham, where his father was a coachman/groom. In the years before 1923, the unemployed workers' movement represented the CPGB's most fertile field of work and he was in the forefront, addressing rallies of up to 10,000 demanding 'work or full pay'. In the 1922 elections to the Board of Guardians, he stood as an unemployed worker rather than a Communist candidate and polled within a hundred votes of his Labour opponent.¹²⁴ He worked in tandem with George Wheeler (b.1888) his fellow CPGB organizer in the North-East (Watson, 2014, pp. 30, 76–77). Gaoled in 1921 on charges of sedition, he was a fiery speaker, who on police accounts, declared: 'I am a rebel of the first force. I hold no brief for law and order. When I fight, I am going to fight on the side of the workers. I don't care what weapons we use ... Meet violence with violence.'¹²⁵ He denied allegations he had stated: 'I get £5 a week from

the Third International in Moscow'. Wheeler was reported as playing a leading role in the NUWCM in 1926 and in unemployed demonstrations across the North East in 1928.¹²⁶

Reflections

This survey confirms the relevance of prosopography to exploring socialist history. Assembling and attending to such a discrete group provides transparency and precision in comparison with approaches based on far larger populations which sometimes focus on random, unrepresentative cases and 'generalise from a handful of eloquent examples' (Verboven, Carlier & Dumolyn, 2007, p.36). Our study also illustrates some of the difficulties. When addressing even a relatively compact cohort, there are absences – for instance in relation to the educational and religious background of the group; unevenness – some of our subjects are better documented than others; and imperfections – richer life histories might, to take one example, have been compiled by combining further genealogical inquiry with greater attention to local history.¹²⁷ However, far-flung archival deposits stretch resources, although the problems with larger teams are well known (Stone, 1987, pp.71–73). Overall, our report underlines the importance of addressing well-defined, transparent and manageable populations and affirms that while statistical analysis is essential, it depends on adequate input generated by archival spade work. We have made a start and other historians may improve on it.

Our findings sometimes correct existing impressions. In contrast to assertions that the CPGB leadership was 'relatively youthful', the data demonstrates that the majority of representatives on these ECs were born before 1890, had a median age of 33 and were active before 1917. Contrary to suggestions of 'alien-ness', all were born in Britain, the majority in England, although there was a substantial Celtic minority. In other instances, the paper validates previous judgements while imparting exactitude. The majority of leaders were

working class and over 60% were skilled workers or miners. But 20% came from white-collar occupations and a handful ran businesses. Despite the prominence of intellectuals in the historiography, only five, defined by their higher education, featured on the EC. In contrast, the survey highlights the significance of ‘worker intellectuals’, autodidacts and IWCE in the early Communist leadership. A sense the SLP/CUG was over-represented is verified by figures demonstrating former activists’ near parity on the EC with veterans of the considerably larger BSP. Intimations of transient tenure and high turnover in the literature are corroborated and rendered precise: 83% of EC members during ‘the long foundation period’ served on only one or two committees, only 5% sat on all five executives. Moreover, 73% of EC members never reappeared on committees later in the decade. By its end, over a third, reacting to changed circumstances, had left the party. Most defectors came to Communism from the revolutionary left and turned right towards Labour. By 1922, the statistics suggest greater stability: continuity was provided by 10 survivors who served on at least 3 committees between 1923 and 1929. This group included a kernel of 5 leaders – Dutt, Gallacher, Murphy, Pollitt and Stewart – who featured on all the committees elected in these years. With the exception of Murphy, they would occupy positions in the leadership – in Stewart’s case taking a secretive role – through the 1940s.

Prosopography is a useful instrument of historiographical recovery: it reveals the range and richness of the personalities and politics of that section of the pre-1920 revolutionary left that came under the hegemony of Bolshevism, and their subsequent careers. Of itself, it cannot explain why events took the turn they did or tell us why the early CPGB was unsuccessful. A novel political organization was born. It remained dependent on the Comintern and failed to fully implement democratic centralism or sink roots among workers, indeed, by 1923, ‘the Communist Party was sneered at by the masses’.¹²⁸ The primary explanation lay in history and contemporary economic and political factors: ‘objective’

circumstances circumscribed the agency of revolutionaries (Hinton & Hyman, 1975, pp.11–26; McKibbin, 1991, pp.1–41). However, prosopography aids understanding of the process; by illuminating the characteristics and qualities, the strengths and weaknesses, of the actors who strove to overcome constraint, it amplifies explanation.

In that context, several observations are relevant. Historians are indebted to Kendall and Challinor for their stress on the significance of the CPGB's predecessors in their own right as well as in the creation of British Communism. They exaggerated their potential; the idea that the BSP was on track to establish a distinctive British socialism until derailed by the Comintern (Kendall, 1969, pp.xii, 296–302) is misplaced. In such scenarios, Hodgson, Watts and Willis would plausibly have presided over an independent, effective British Marxism during the 1920s. In reality, they were ill-equipped to build an autonomous party or current. From the vantage point of 1920, the CPGB's predecessors remained marginal and unlikely to thrive in conditions of revolutionary retreat and ascendant Labourism. The record suggests that the majority of the initial leadership cohort were courageous and committed, in some cases, talented and imaginative. Collectively, they were inadequate to the even more daunting task of assembling, on any significant scale, a party on the Soviet model. Limited understanding of Bolshevism went hand-in-hand with willingness to subordinate their own thinking to the authority of those who had made a revolution in a very different country. It is otiose to try to separate out the impact of the intermeshed elements of Bolshevik power and prestige and Russian gold; for most, they dovetailed harmoniously. As the terms of engagement between capital and labour shifted, the leaders of British Communism proved incapable of meeting the challenge they had set themselves.

Few had entered the CPGB as revolutionaries of the first rank. Deer, Hodgson, Shaw, Watts and Willis had been propelled into prominence in the movement against Hyndman. Their earlier experience left them unprepared for leadership as the Comintern understood it.

Inkpin's skills as a factotum ensured his survival but other BSP activists, Fletcher, Kerran, Kirker, Vaughan, had never operated on a national level. The SLPers, Bell, MacManus and Murphy, had been leaders – and Paul a propagandist – in a shop stewards' movement which deprecated leadership. Directing and managing a vanguard party was different. The same went for Gallacher, whose activity in the BSP was restricted. Their metier was struggle in the workshops, their milieu grass roots militancy, not the set-piece, defensive battles of the 1920s led by the union bureaucracy – still less *political* mobilization. They possessed scant experience of trade unionism beyond the workplace and as rank-and-file organization and combativity crumbled, their skill-set as well as their ideas required revamping.

A glance at the **Appendix** reveals how few of the sample had experience of significant political or industrial struggles. Most possessed no more than a superficial grasp of Leninism. 'The CPGB', Borodin reflected in 1922, 'had good organizers and writers, it lacks people of wide Communist knowledge, Communist training and political vision'.¹²⁹ Taken collectively, EC members failed to demonstrate the qualities the Comintern sought in cadres: familiarity with Bolshevik method, ability to apply Comintern strategy, capability to think on one's feet, mobilize and manage key sections of workers, make Communists and build the party. Dutt put this down to their past and considered experience in the BSP and SLP a handicap: 'They are often very good comrades but useless for our purposes', despite their '10, 15 or 20 years in the movement ... Acceptance of the new ideas and the new work on the part of the old forces', he believed, 'was practically nominal ... they did not understand it'.¹³⁰ He disdained those seasoned in 'the sects': flawed by his formation in the BSP, Inkpin was, from this perspective, little more than a left-wing Labourite. In response, the latter assailed his antagonist for caricaturing the party's problems and neglecting his own responsibilities.¹³¹ Dutt's standing as an *arriviste* intellectual, lack of proletarian credentials and impatience with opponents, certainly militated against his integration into a collective

leadership. Both he and Inkpin represented fragments of holistic conceptions of a cadre. Neither resembled a mass leader while the erratic Gallacher, who had some experience in that regard, was bluntly but fairly informed: ‘You are unqualified temperamentally for leading the party.’¹³² The cap fitted many EC representatives.

Rivalries ensured the EC did not function as a collective leadership although: ‘These divisions are not divisions of principle in the ordinary sense’.¹³³ Factions offering alternative political platforms emerged in other Comintern affiliates but not in Britain; only looser coalitions around MacManus, apprehensive about change, and Dutt, marked by enthusiasm for ‘Bolshevization’ and financial self-sufficiency. The October 1922 EC elections failed to break the impasse. Pollitt, touted as a replacement for Inkpin, was a talented organizer with union contacts. He possessed a patchy record before 1920, played no role in the party’s establishment and was reliant politically on Dutt. Even Newbold, who was sympathetic to the ‘new forces’, felt Dutt could not field ‘a better team’ than MacManus.¹³⁴ The CPGB proved unable to solve its own problems. The Comintern, in the shape of the English Commission, stepped in.

[insert Appendix here, starting on a new landscape page]

Appendix: Members CPGB Executive Committees, 1920–1923

Name (Residence 1920)	Date/Place of birth/ nationality Age in 1920	Social origins	Occupation/ trade union	Previous Affiliations	CCs 1920– 23	Joined/left CPGB (date of death) CPGB office	EC after 1922
Richard Clyde BEECH (Hull)	1892 Hull English 28	Working-class F: Seafarer M: China dealer (Irish)	General labourer; seafarer; salesman; journalist; writer. National Union of Seamen; Chemical Workers' Union	IWW; WSF; CP-BSTI	1	1921; 1922 → Communist Workers' Party; rejoined CPGB; left c.1931 → ILP; → LP (d.1955) Comintern Congress delegate	No
Thomas Hargrave BELL (Glasgow)	1882 Parkhead, Glasgow Scottish 38	Working-class F: Apprentice stonemason; steelworker M: Textile homeworker Non-practising Church of Scotland	Iron moulder; munitions worker; Comintern worker; Associated Iron Moulders of Scotland	ILP; SDF; SLP; IWGB; CWC; NSS&WCM; CUG.	3	1920 (d.1944) NO; Comintern Congress delegate; ECCI; Comintern Rep.; Friends of the Soviet Union; ILS section head	Yes
John BIRD (Bowhill, Fife)	1896 West Calder, Midlothian Scottish 24	Working-class F: Coal miner M: Housewife	Coal miner; Fife, Kinross and Clackmannan Miners' Association; Mineworkers' Reform Union	BSP; Fife Miners' Reform Committee	2	1920? Left 1930 (d.1964)	No
John 'Jack' BRADDOCK (Liverpool)	1892 Hanley, Staffs English	Working-class (white-collar) F: Pottery worker; School Board officer M: Housewife	Railway waggon builder/repairer; Railway Waggon Builders Union.	ILP; IWW	2	1920; left 1924 → LP (d.1963) Control Commission	No

	28						
William Thomas BRAIN (Birmingham)	1891 Birmingham English 29	Working-class F: Blacksmith M: Housewife	Engineer; National Union of Iron Founders; Transport and General Workers' Union	SLP; NSS&WCM	2	1920 (d.1961) DO; BBRILU; Agit- Prop; Midlands Organizer RILU.	Yes
James E. CAMERON (Newcastle)	1892 Ryton, Durham English 28	Working-class F: Coachman/groom M: Housewife	Engineer; unemployed AEU		2	DO	No
Alfred Egbert (A. E.) COOK (Cardiff)	c.1891 29		Businessman (owned two shops)	SLP; CUG; South Wales Communist Council [CO]	2	1920	No
George DEACON (Seven Kings, Essex)	1893 Reading English 27	Working-class F: Carpenter M: Housewife	Clerk; newsagent/ tobacconist; company secretary; lecturer on banking, finance and commerce; University College Reading. National Union of Clerks	Tory until 1910; ILP; Herald League; Herald League (Communist Group) [CO]	3	1920; left late 1920s→LP (d.1968)	Yes
George DEER (Lincoln)	1890 Grimsby, Lincolnshire English 30	Working-class F: Fisherman M: Housewife	Assistant candlemaker; advertiser for soap; railway worker; dock worker; Workers' Union organizer	BSP [CO]	1	1920; left 1921→LP (d.1974)	No

Rajani Palme DUTT (London)	1896 Cambridge English 24	Middle-class (Professional) Immigrant family F: Bengali doctor M: Swedish writer/housewife	Oxford University; school teacher; Labour Research Department; National Union of Journalists; General and Municipal Workers' Union	ILP; National Guilds League; Guilds League Communists [CO]	1	1920 (d.1974) Editor, <i>Labour Monthly, Workers' Weekly</i> ; Comintern Congress delegate; ECCI Candidate (1935); General Secretary (1939– 1941)	Yes
George FLETCHER (Sheffield)	1879 Horncastle, Lincolnshire English 41	Working-class F: Shoemaker M: Housewife	Baker; Amalgamated Society of Operative Bakers	SDF/SDP/BSP	2	1920 (d.1958) Treasurer, MM; Comintern Congress delegate	No
Owen FORD (Warsop, Nottinghamshire)	1882 Gleadless, near Sheffield English 38	Working-class F: Coal miner M: Housewife	Coal miner (hewer); Checkweighman; Nottinghamshire Miners' Association	SLP	1	1920 (d.1977) DO	No
William Jackson GALLACHER (Glasgow)	1881 Paisley, near Glasgow Scottish 39	Working-class F: Agricultural labourer; foundry labourer M: Farm servant; washerwoman Catholic	Brass finisher in engineering factory; munitions worker; National Union of Brassfounders; ASE	ILP; SDF/SDP/BSP; CLP; CWC; NSS&WCM	2	1921 (d.1965) Vice Chair; Comintern Congress delegate; Comintern rep; ECCI;	Yes

						BBRILU; MP, West Fife (1935–1950).	
William James HEWLETT (Abertillery, South Wales))	1876 Penalt, Monmouthshire Welsh 44	Working-class F: Tin works labourer M: Housewife	Coal miner; SWMF	Unofficial Reform Committee; SLP; SWSS; SWCC; CUG	2	1920 (d.1921) Comintern and RILU Congress delegate	No
John Frederick HODGSON (aka Edwin Player) (Reading)	1866 York English 54	Working-class F: Tailor's cutter M: Housewife	Foreman cutter, wholesale clothing; departmental manager, wholesale clothing stores	BSP	4	1920; left 1922 (d.1947) Treasurer	No
Albert Samuel INKPIN (London)	1884 London English 36	Working-class F: Cabinetmaker M: Housewife Church of England	Office boy; solicitor's clerk; National Union of Clerks	SDF/SDP/BSP	5	1920 (d.1944) Secretary until 1929; International Secretariat, Friends of the Soviet Union; Secretary, <i>Russia Today</i> Society	Yes
Thomas Alfred JACKSON (London)	1879 London English 41	Working-class F: Composer M: Housewife	Composer; social/political lecturer; writer; London Society of Compositors	SDF; SPGB; SLP; CUG; IWCE	1	1920 (d.1955) Editor; DO	Yes
Ferdinand Louis. KERRAN aka Kehrhahn (London)	1883 Tranmere, near	Middle-class F: Watchmaker and repairer, own shop	Operated small photography and postcard publishing	ILP; SDF/SDP/BSP	1	1920; 1924 → LP (d.1949)	No

	Birkenhead, Cheshire English 37	M: Housewife German/English parents Lutheran/Church of England	business with his brother			Comintern Congress delegate	
William KIRKER (Bowhill, Fife)	1891 Penpont, Dumfriesshir e Scottish 29	Working-class F: Colliery plasterer M: Housewife	Coal miner; Fife, Kinross and Clackmannan Miners' Association; Mineworkers' Reform Union	BSP; Fife Miners' Reform Committee	1	1920 Imprisoned for embezzling union funds in 1925.	No
Patrick "Paddy" LAVIN (Glasgow)	1881 Irish 39		Coal miner; secretary, Scottish Labour College; Comintern worker; translator and journalist	ILP; SLP	2	1920; left 1923 Comintern rep.	No
John Villiers 'Jack'. LECKIE (Glasgow)	1887 Maybole, Ayrshire (Illegitimate) Scottish 33	Working-class Irish Nationalist F: Journeyman shoemaker M: Shoe sprigger	Engineer; German Communist Party worker ASE	IWW; Scottish Workers' Committee; Fife Communist League; CLP	1	1921 DO; Secretary, Workers' International Relief	No
Joseph MacDONALD (Glasgow)				SLP; CLP	1	1921	No
Arthur MacMANUS (London)	1888 Glasgow Scottish 32	Working-class Irish immigrant parents F: Chrystal packer; engineman	Engineer in sewing machine factory; munitions worker; Comintern worker; ASE	SLP; IWGB; CWC; NSS&WCM; CUG	5	1920 (d.1927) Chair; Comintern Congress delegate;	Yes

		M: Housewife Irish Nationalist Catholic				ECCI; Comintern Rep.	
John Cecil L'Estrange MALONE (London)	1890 Beverley, Yorkshire English 30	Minor aristocracy/clergy F: Vicar, Church of England M: Housewife	Royal Naval College, Dartmouth; Naval officer	Liberal Party; BSP;	1	1920; left 1922 → LP (d.1965) MP for East Leyton (1918–1922) (as Communist, 1920– 1922)	No
Alexander McGEACHAN (Greenock)	1888 Glasgow Scottish 32	Working-class F: Baker M: Housewife	Engineer in sewing machine factory; unemployed ASE	SLP; IWGB//	2	1921	No
William McKIE (Edinburgh)	1876 Carlisle English 44	Working-class F: Signalman M: Housewife	Tinsmith; Tinplate worker in biscuit factory		2		No
John McLEAN (Glasgow)	1891 Glasgow Scottish 29	Working-class F: Blacksmith; engine driver (Irish, Presbyterian) M: Housewife	Labourer	SLP; Scottish Workers' Committee; Communist League; Parkhead Communist Group; CLP	2	1921	No
William MELLOR (London)	1888 Crewe, Cheshire English 32	Middle-class (Clergy) F: Unitarian minister M: Housewife	Oxford University; Fabian Research Dept; journalist/editor; National Union of Journalists	ILP; National Guilds League; Guilds League Communists [CO]	2	1920; left 1924→ LP/Socialist League (d.1942)	No

Dora MONTEFIORE (Crowborough, Sussex)	1851 Kenley, Surrey English 69	Middle-class F: Surveyor; railway entrepreneur Church of England? Married to Jewish businessman	Independent means	SDF/SDP	2	1920; moved to Australia, 1922; returned to Britain and retired from politics in 1929 (d.1933) CPA Comintern Congress delegate	No
John Thomas 'Jack' MURPHY (Sheffield)	1888 Ardwick, Manchester English 32	Working-class F: Blacksmith's striker M: Housewife Methodist	Turner in toolroom; munitions worker; ASE	SLP; NSS&WCM; Sheffield Workers' Committee	3	1920; left 1932 → LP/Socialist League (d.1965) BBRILU; Acting Secretary CPGB; Comintern Congress delegate; ECCI; Comintern rep.; correspondent <i>Pravda</i>	Yes
William PAUL (Derby)	1884 Glasgow Scottish 36	Working-class F: Wine merchant's storekeeper; jewellery traveller M: Housewife	Jeweller; artist; hosiery dealer; editor	SLP; CUG; NSS&WCM [CO]	3	1920 (d.1958) Editor, <i>Communist Review</i> , <i>Sunday Worker</i>	No
Fred H. PEET (London)	1890 Bethnal Green, London English	Working-class F: Piano maker M: Housewife	Commercial traveller (medical)	BSP [CO]	1	1920; left late 1920s (d.1951) Assistant Secretary; Acting Secretary (1921)	No

	30						
Harry POLLITT (Manchester)	1890 Droylsden, Manchester English 30	Working-class F: Blacksmith's striker M: Textile worker	Boilermaker; Amalgamated Society of Boilermakers	ILP; BSP; WSF; NSS&WCM	1	1920? (d.1960) BBRILU; Comintern Congress delegate; Secretary, MM; General Secretary (1929–1939, 1941– 1956); ECCI	Yes
John William PRATT (London)	1876 Miles End London English 44	Middle-class? F: Manager	Compositor	North London Clarion Esperanto Society; BSP?	2	1920?	No
Fred SHAW (Huddersfield)	1890 Lindley, near Huddersfield English 30	Working-class F: Foreman in factory blacksmith's shop Liberal M: Housewife	Engineering worker; ASE	SLP; BSP	1	1920; left 1923 → LP (d.1951)	No
George H. SHILLITOE (Castleford, Yorkshire)	1882 Castleford, Yorkshire English 38	Working-class F: Miner M: Housewife	Colliery labourer; YMA		2	(d.1948) DO	No
Fred SILVESTER (Birmingham)	1872 Aston, Birmingham English	Working-class (white-collar) F: School board officer	Clerk, County Court	SLP; CUG	1	1920; left 1922 (d.1934)	No

	48	M: Housewife					
Robert STEWART (Dundee)	1877 Eassie, Angus Scottish 43	Working-class F: Carter M: Housewife	Jute mill worker; carpenter/joiner; political/trade union organiser; Amalgamated Assoc. of Carpenters and Joiners; Scottish Horse and Motormen's Association	Scottish Prohibition Party; Socialist Prohibition Fellowship [CO]	2	1920 (d.1971) Comintern Congress delegate; Comintern rep.; ECCI; Scottish Organizer; Acting Secretary (1925– 1926)	Yes
Mrs A. THOMAS					2		No
Joseph James VAUGHAN (London)	1878 East London English 42	Working-class F: Woodcarver, chairmaker M: Housewife	Electrician; Electrical Trades Union	Liberal Party; SDF/SDP/BSP [CO]	1	1920 (d.1938) Comintern Congress delegate	No
Nathaniel WATKINS (Doncaster)	1874 Pencoed, Glamorgan Welsh 46	Working-class F: Coalminer M: Housewife	Coal miner; Rhondda District Miners' Association; SWMF; YMA	South Wales Unofficial Reform Movement; Yorkshire Miners' Reform Movement; Doncaster Workers' Committee; NSS&WCM	1	1920 (d.1952) BBRILU; Secretary, Miners' Minority Movement; RILU Congress delegate	Yes
Thomas Joseph WATKINS (Trethomas, South Wales)	1884 Mountain Ash, Glamorgan Welsh	Working-class F: Coal miner M; Housewife	Coal miner, Bedwas Colliery; SWMF	South Wales Unofficial Reform Committee; CUG; CP-BSTI	2	1921; left 1921 (d.1924)	No

	36						
Alfred Augustus WATTS (London)	1861 Bow, London English 59	Working-class F: Coachmaker M: Housewife	Compositor; overseer, composing dept; London Society of Compositors	SDF/SDP/BSP	2	1920 (d.1928)	No
Harry WEBB (Ashton under Lyne)	1892 Ashton under Lyne, Lancashire English 28	Working-class F: Iron roller fitter M: Housewife	Cotton mill worker	SLP; CUG	3	1920 (d.1962) NO; Supplementary Department	Yes
George WHEELER (Newcastle)	1890 Houghton le Spring, Durham English 30	Working-class F: Coal miner M: Housewife	Blacksmith's striker; engineer (turner); ASE; unemployed		1	DO	No
Edgar Thoreau WHITEHEAD aka Edgar Bray (London)	1890 Venice, Italy English 30	Middle-class F: Seamen's missionary; general dealer; shopkeeper M: Assistant shopkeeper	London university	Labour Abstentionist Party; CP-BSTI [CO]	1	1921; left 1924 →LP; 1933 → BUF (d.1956)	No
Frederick George WILLIS (London)	1873 London English 47	Working-class F: Carter M: Housewife	Traveller in woodworking machinery; collector to trade union (London Society of	SDF/SDP/BSP	1	1920 (d.1947) Editor, <i>Communist</i>	No

			Tailors and Tailoresses); editor				
Harry YOUNG (London)	1901 Islington, London English 19	Working-class F: ran bicycle shop; furniture removals M: Housewife; sewing machinist	Tea boy; apprentice optician; telephonist; bookshop assistant; taxi driver; ambulance man; Comintern worker; teacher	BSP; Herald League [CO]	1	1920; left later 1930s; 1939 → SPGB (d.1995) National organizer, YCL; YCL rep. in Moscow 1920s; English editor, <i>Communist International</i>	Yes

Abbreviations: **AEU:** Amalgamated Engineering Union; **ASE:** Amalgamated Society of Engineers; **BBRILU:** British Bureau, RILU; **BSP:** British Socialist Party; **BUF:** British Union of Fascists; **CLP:** Communist Labour Party; **CO:** Conscientious Objector; **CPA:** Communist Party of Australia; **CP-BSTI:** Communist Party (British Section of the Third International); **CWC:** Clyde Workers' Committee; **CUG:** Communist Unity Group; **DO:** District Organizer; **ECCI:** Executive Committee, Communist International; **ILP:** Independent Labour Party; **ILS:** International Lenin School; **IWGB:** Industrial Workers of Great Britain; **IWW:** Industrial Workers of the World; **LP:** Labour Party; **MM:** Minority Movement; **NO:** National Organizer; **RILU:** Red International of Labour Unions; **SDF:** Social Democratic Federation; **SDP:** Social Democratic Party; **SLP:** Socialist Labour Party; **SPGB:** Socialist Party of Great Britain; **NSS&WCM:** National Shop Stewards and Workers' Committee Movement; **SWMF:** South Wales Miners' Federation; **SWCC:** South Wales Communist Council; **SWSS:** South Wales Socialist Society; **WPSU:** Women's Political and Social Union; **WSF:** Workers' Socialist Federation; **YCL:** Young Communist League; **YMA:** Yorkshire Miners' Association.

Notes

¹ Kendall (1969), pp.3–183, remains a very useful survey of the pre-Communist left. See also Challinor (1977), pp.9–170. Communists dated the foundation of their party from 1920 and referred to that summer’s convention as ‘the First Congress’. However, it could be plausibly argued that the process of negotiation and the creation of a unified party was only completed in 1921 – either at the January Congress or some months later with entry of the ILP left wing.

² A detailed synopsis of the CPGB’s difficulties is in the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI), 495/38/1, pp.1–166, Transcripts of Meetings of the English Commission of the ECCI, June–July 1923 (hereafter English Commission).

³ RGASPI, 495/100/61, First Report of the Party Commission, 1922; Report on Organization presented to the Fifth Congress of the CPGB, October 1922; Macfarlane (1966), pp.77–82; RGASPI, 495/38/1, pp.97–99, English Commission.

⁴ RGASPI, 495/38/1, pp.11–17, 24–25, 60, English Commission.

⁵ RGASPI, 495/100/53, Borodin to Rakosi, 17 July 1922.

⁶ Quotes from RGASPI, 495/38/1, MacManus (p.93), Radek (p.9), Zinoviev (p.3), English Commission.

⁷ A number of relevant Communists have entries in the *Dictionary of National Biography* and the *Dictionary of Labour Biography*.

⁸ The historiography includes collective biography: Wood (1959), Werskey (1978). Morgan, Cohen & Flinn (2007) aims to interrogate the membership over 70 years without a representative sample or prosopographical analysis of the national leadership.

⁹ Nomenclature varied; for simplicity, we have called it the Executive Committee (EC), throughout. Division of the EC into political and organizational bureaux introduced at the Fifth Congress (**Table 5**) only operated from the end of our period.

¹⁰ Thus avoiding problems of sample construction. See Klehr (1978), pp.6–11, and McIlroy and Campbell (2019), p. 178. Reference should be made to the two MPs absent from ECs. J.T. Walton Newbold (1888–1943), from a family of Lancashire corn merchants, a journalist who joined the CPGB in 1921 with the ILP left wing, was returned as Communist MP for Motherwell in 1922. Newbold lost his seat in 1923 and quit the CPGB for Labour. The Bombay-born bourgeois, Shapurji Saklatvala (1874–1936), came to England in 1905 and joined the CPGB from the ILP in 1921. He was elected Labour MP for Battersea North in 1922 (as a CPGB member) and Communist MP two years later. Losing his seat in 1929, he remained in the party until his death.

¹¹ An exhaustive account of the national leadership would discuss others significant in the party if marginal to its governance. Francis Meynell (1891–1975), for example, was involved in handling Comintern subsidies and edited *The Communist*. From a middle-class, Roman Catholic background, poet, publisher, expert in typography, business manager and assistant editor of the *Daily Herald*, Meynell soon quit the party and ended life as Sir Francis. He was succeeded as editor of *The Communist* by the Oxford-educated conscientious objector, Raymond Postgate (1896–1971), another protégé – and son-in-law – of George Lansbury. Postgate parted company with the CPGB in 1924. The author of *Bolshevik Theory* went on to a career as a writer, historian and creator of *The Good Food Guide*. Tom Mann (1856–1941), veteran socialist and syndicalist, adhered to Communism in 1922 after retiring as general secretary of the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU). He continued as a paid functionary of the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) and the National Minority Movement (MM) into the 1930s. Leading suffragette and animator of the WSF, Sylvia Pankhurst (1882–1960), was active in events preceding the CPGB’s creation. Expelled in 1921, she became an advocate of Council Communism. Ellen Wilkinson (1891–1947), a graduate of Manchester University, suffragette and union organizer, left the CPGB in 1924 to pursue a career as a Labour MP, serving as Minister of Education in the 1945 Labour government. Her fellow Mancunian, William McLaine (1891–1960), a skilled engineering worker active in the shop stewards’ movement, represented the BSP at the Second Congress of the Comintern in Moscow and was secretary of the Workers’ International Relief. He worked for Russian Oil Products and acquired a PhD, drifting out of the party and becoming Assistant General Secretary of the AEU.

¹² The 1920 committee consisted of representatives elected at the Foundation Conference and members of the committee which completed negotiations (see **Table 1**). The January 1921 body comprised members appointed by the fusing groups and representatives elected by members voting in geographical divisions, with the chairman elected by the Congress and the secretary appointed by the provisional committee (see **Table 2**). The two succeeding committees were elected at Congress but the October 1922 committee was reconstructed by the Comintern’s English Commission: Macfarlane (1966), pp.83–84; RGASPI, 495/38/1, pp.113–19, 140; RGASPI, 495/2/17, p.92, Minute 26, Presidium of the ECCI, 5 July 1923. The hybrid methods employed to constitute the first two ECs over-privileged the smaller groups. This may distort conclusions regarding representation of the founding organizations in the CPGB leadership.

¹³ Whitehead, born in Venice to English parents, has been treated as English.

¹⁴ Thorpe (2000b), pp.785–786, citing the examples of Pollitt and Dutt in 1922 and three others in the 1930s.

¹⁵ None of the group appears to have adopted a Leninist position on the conflict. Anti-war sentiment was widespread among future EC members, attempts to organize opposition among workers negligible. Despite the criticism of John Maclean, it was 1918 before the shop stewards' leaders raised the issue of mobilizing members. So far as can be established, 10 of our 47 leaders (21%) – Cook, Deacon, Deer, Dutt, Mellor, Paul, Peet, Stewart, Vaughan and Whitehead – were conscientious objectors brought before the military tribunals and in most cases serving prison terms: Imperial War Museum, Lives of the First World War, based on Pearce Register of COs, at <https://livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk/> (hereafter IWM). Inkin was exempted from military service on the grounds he worked for a political party; Bird relocated to avoid conscription.

¹⁶ Communist Party Archives, Labour History Archive and Study Centre, Manchester (hereafter CPA), CP/CENT/WOM/3/2, Lily Ferguson. March 1957. In 1911, the SLP had 25 branches – 12 in the West of Scotland – by 1920 the figure almost doubled to 48: Challinor (1977) p.91; *Socialist*, 29 January 1920.

¹⁷ Pollitt claimed foundation membership citing continued subscription to the Openshaw BSP, although he had been inactive there. On his own account, he joined the WSF in 1919/1920: Pollitt (1940), p.91.

¹⁸ *Socialist*, 7 October 1920, 1 September 1921; *Communist*, 30 September 1920; *Workers' Dreadnought*, 4 December 1920; Macfarlane (1966), pp.51–52.

¹⁹ While it is important to identify and quantify protagonists' past affiliations, members differed in the quality of attachments and the intensity and duration of commitment and activity.

²⁰ RGASPI, 495/100/61, Party Commission, First Report. Members' dues contributed only 2.7% of party income; salaries amounting to £215 per week discounting expenses depended on Soviet funds. The average weekly earnings of skilled engineering workers ranged from £4 9s 2d to £4 13s 5d in 1920 (National Industrial Conference Board, 1921, p.34).

²¹ *The Labour Who's Who* (1924), p.44; *Justice*, 5 October 1912; Census of England and Wales (CEW), 1911, Registration District (RD)129/1, Enumeration District (ED) 31.

²² Fears were expressed that intellectuals 'would gain control of the movement' and that delegates at the March 1922 conference were 'ready to cover the floor with the blood of the intellectuals': RGASPI, 495/38/1, Gallacher and Jackson.

²³ RGASPI, 495/38/1, English Commission. MacManus was sometimes styled the party 'president'.

²⁴ *Daily Herald*, 26 December 1933; *Hastings and St Leonards Observer*, 30 December 1933.

²⁵ CEW, 1901, RD Great Grimsby, ED30; CEW 1911, RD 422/1, ED 12; *The Labour Who's Who* (1924), p.44; Obituary, *The Times*, 17 May 1974, makes no mention of Deer's early politics; Stenton and Lees (1981); *Call*, 14, 21 December 1916, 11 January, 22 February 1917; Library of the Society of Friends, London, SER/VOPC/Cases/3(3645), George Deer of Grimsby. In 1916, Deer married Olive Stoakes (1897–1983). Born in Grimsby and raised in Cleethorpes, she was active in the BSP and later a London County Councillor and Alderman.

²⁶ Kendall (1969), pp.243, 246–247; Martin & Saville (1984); National Archives UK (NAUK), CAB24/114/27, Report on Revolutionary Organizations, 28 October 1920.

²⁷ In 1920, Malone believed that the CPGB would become 'in the not too distant future the governing force in this country' (*Communist*, 5 August 1920).

²⁸ Saville (1977), pp.156–160; CEW, 1901, RD Huddersfield, Lockwood, ED17; CEW, 1911, RD495/9, ED17.

²⁹ Macintyre (1980), p.36; Millar (1979), pp.176–177; Saville (1977); RGASPI, 495/100/119, Marxian Education in Britain and Independent Working Class Education in Britain, 26 April 1923; RGASPI, 495/100/159, Statement of Policy to be Pursued by CP Members through the Plebs League and Labour College Movement, n.d. [1924].

³⁰ *Call*, 24 April 1919, 1, 8 July 1920; CEW, 1881, RD West Leeds, ED39; CEW, 1911, RD121/1, ED20.

Writing in the *Socialist*, August 1918, Newbold noted 'the fairly numerous ... small shopkeeper and craftsman element in the BSP'. As early as 1898, Hodgson was earning £4 10s a week (*Reading Observer*, 16 February 1923); cf. Bowley's estimate (1900, p.70) of the average weekly wage of a London artisan as £2 in 1897.

³¹ His speech provoked Paul's remark, 'Lenin is no Pope nor God': CPA, CP/CENT/CONG/01/02, Communist Unity Convention, July 31 and August 1, 1920, p.35; Klugmann (1966), pp.17, 46–47. Hodgson also attended the Amsterdam Conference convened by the leftist Western Bureau of the Comintern, where he advocated CPGB affiliation to Labour (Kendall, 1969, pp.207–208; Macfarlane, 1966, pp.49–50).

³² *Call*, 20 May, 8 July 1920.

³³ Document (1974). Arthur Henderson quoted a newspaper report that Hodgson had claimed Communists aimed to sever links between Labour and the working class, a claim MacManus denied (p.21).

³⁴ *Reading Observer*, 29 May 1915, 16 February 1923; 1939 National Register of England and Wales, RD122/2, Edwin Player, Reading; Death Certificate, John Frederick Hodgson, otherwise Player, 4 January 1947, Wokingham, Berkshire.

³⁵ Collette (1987) and Crick (1994, p.314) suggest an affair. Hunt (2018) points to the paucity of evidence.

³⁶ Allen (1986); Hunt (2001); RGASPI, 495/100/33, Montefiore to Hertha Sturm, 22 December 1921.

- ³⁷ RGASPI, 495/10/159, PB, 23 September 1924.
- ³⁸ Ferdinand Louis Kehrhahn, 28 August 1883: Ancestry.com. *England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538-1975*; CEW, 1911, RD43/1, ED9; *Call*, 30 November 1916. The family may have returned to Germany for a time since Ferdinand's father is recorded as living in Wismar, Mecklenburg, in the German census of 1890: <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XMQQ-HZM>.
- ³⁹ *The Times*, 5 January 1917.
- ⁴⁰ *Call*, 15 July 1920.
- ⁴¹ *Call*, 30 November 1916, 11 January 1917, 19 November 1920; *The Times*, 5 January 1917.
- ⁴² *Call*, 21 October 1920. Defeated as a Communist in North-East Bethnal Green in 1922, Windsor (1884–1945) was elected as an official Labour candidate the following year.
- ⁴³ Census of Scotland (CS), 1911, 405/17/2.
- ⁴⁴ As a result of CPGB opposition, party organization in Fife deteriorated: RGASPI, 495/100/103, CC, 2 March 1923; 495/10/104, PB, 22 March, 6 September 1923; Campbell (2000), pp.191–208.
- ⁴⁵ CEW, 1881, RD Birmingham St Martin, ED27; CEW, 1911, RD384/1, ED28.
- ⁴⁶ *Sunday Worker*, 12 May 1929, quoted Parker (2018), p.78.
- ⁴⁷ *Pioneer*, 21, 28 September 1918.
- ⁴⁸ *Pioneer*, 28 September 1918.
- ⁴⁹ *Pioneer*, 28 September 1918.
- ⁵⁰ *Pioneer*, 28 September 1918.
- ⁵¹ *Socialist*, 10 June 1920.
- ⁵² *Communist*, 30 September, 23 September 1920.
- ⁵³ RGASPI, 495/100/61, Party Commission, First Report, p.25. The justification for his salary was that expenses for attending EC meetings would amount to a similar figure.
- ⁵⁴ CPA, 1995 Microfilm Reel, Patrick Lavin, Questionnaire on United Front; Milton (1973), pp.266, 269; MacDougall (1981), p.36.
- ⁵⁵ NAUK, CAB24/103/39, Report on Revolutionary Organisations, 8 April 1920.
- ⁵⁶ RGASPI, 495/100/27, F.H. Peet and A. Inkpin to Karl Radek, 1 December 1921.
- ⁵⁷ RGASPI, 495/100/117, Letter from P. Lavin to EC, 19 October 1923; RGASPI, 495/100/104, PB, 5 November 1923; RGASPI, 495/10/159, PB, 8 April 1924. MacDougall (1981, p.172, n.5) states: 'Lavin apparently emigrated to Canada c.1970' – which seems unlikely as he would then have been approaching 90. Milton (1973, pp.7, 266), implies that the author spoke to Lavin when researching the book in 1937–1938.
- ⁵⁸ CEW, 1901, RD Northwich, Over, ED17; IWM; *The Labour Who's Who* (1924), p.188; NAUK, KV2/3799, Edgar Bray alias Whitehead and Sophia Bray alias Voznesensky.
- ⁵⁹ RGASPI, 495/100/113, W.R. Stoker to Comrade Bucharin [*sic*], 23 February 1923; CPA, CP/CENT/CONG/01/04, Report of Executive Committee, CPGB, 1922, p.13.
- ⁶⁰ RGASPI, 495/100/160, PB, 27 June 1924; *Workers' Weekly*, 4 July 1924, warned readers that Whitehead was no longer a member and had no connection with the party.
- ⁶¹ Tate (2018), pp.362–365; NAUK, KV2/3799, Edgar Bray.
- ⁶² CEW, 1911, RD590/4, ED41.
- ⁶³ *Pioneer*, 15 September 1917; *South Wales Daily News*, 13 April 1918, where Watkins stated the committee had been revived in June 1917 with Will Mainwaring as secretary. Watkins was a committee member: *Pioneer*, 3, 13 August 1918.
- ⁶⁴ CPA, CP/CENT/CONG/01/02, Communist Unity Convention, July 31–August 1 1920, Official Report, pp.49–50.
- ⁶⁵ *Workers' Dreadnought*, 25 September, 2 October, 23 October 1920, quoting 'A Miner's Call', by Tom Watkins: 'Victimisation means starving into submission any worker who has the manliness to oppose the tyranny of capitalism ...'
- ⁶⁶ Report of National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement, 3rd Conference, 9–11 April 1923, pp.18–21.
- ⁶⁷ Cole (1973), pp.123–127; IWM; *The Labour Who's Who* (1924), p.114. Willie Gallacher asserted in 1923 that intellectuals like Mellor had earlier 'dominated the party': RGASPI, 495/38/1, p.32. Wal Hannington denounced 'a pseudo-intellectual' who argued at the Third CPGB Congress that officials at party headquarters should be paid £8 a week – a speaker identified with Mellor: RGASPI, 495/38/1, p.86; Braddock & Braddock (1963), p.29.
- ⁶⁸ *Communist*, 5 August 1920.
- ⁶⁹ RGASPI, 495/100/159, PB, 3 October 1924, recording that Mellor cited unspecified differences with party policy. The CPGB told the Comintern that Mellor was 'an intellectual who disagreed with the Party's attitude towards Labour's leaders ... criticises the Minority Movement': RGASPI, 495/100/196, 'Our Renegades'.
- ⁷⁰ Davies (2004); Braddock & Braddock (1963), pp.31–45. Braddock claimed to have worked as a casual labourer for the Russian trading company, Arcos, through Inkpin's good offices after he had left the party (Braddock & Braddock, 1963, pp.65–68).

- ⁷¹ RGASPI, 495/100/123, Correspondence between Control Commission CPGB and Secretariat of the ECCI, 9 July 1923; 495/100/171, Control Commission to Secretariat, Comintern, 27 April 1923; Control Commission Recommendations to EC, CPGB, 1 January 1923. Years later, Braddock recalled his annoyance at party officials drawing £5 a week, 'twice what I would have been paid if I had been able to get work as a skilled wagon-builder' (Braddock & Braddock, 1963, p.44). RGASPI, 495/100/103; 495/100/159, PB, 6 June, 15 August 1924; cf. Braddock & Braddock pp.59–63. The parting was sparked by Bessie's refusal to provide the EC with information; she was reduced to probationary membership for six months and she and Jack resigned.
- ⁷² Weller (1985), p.64; CEW, 1901, RD Hull, ED 25; CEW, 1911, RD 466/3, ED 3.
- ⁷³ For Beech's acumen in arranging for revolutionaries to travel to Russia, see Wilmslow (1996), p.155.
- ⁷⁴ Mahon (1976), pp.140–143; Lerner (1961), pp.23–24; NAUK, KV2/3045, Richard Clyde Beech; RGASPI, 495/100/544, May–July 1928, Materials on ARCOS and ROP.
- ⁷⁵ Bornstein & Richardson (1986), pp.52, 75; Lerner (1961), pp.23–24; NAUK, KV2/3045, Richard Clyde Beech; RGASPI, 495/100/833, Harry Pollitt to Jimmy Shields, 15 June, 5, 17 August 1932; 'Dear Friends' [Comintern to CPGB], 8 August 1932.
- ⁷⁶ Like Hewlett, Mainwaring joined the CPGB; Ablett and Hay did not.
- ⁷⁷ *Communist*, 5 August 1920.
- ⁷⁸ *Daily Herald*, 1 August 1921. Bell's suggestion of sabotage played into a narrative of Hewlett as a revolutionary martyr; see the eulogy in the *Communist*, 20 August 1921.
- ⁷⁹ National Records of Scotland (NRS), Valuation Rolls, Greenock, 1920, Alexander McGechan [sic]; CS, 1911, 501/38/19; *Worker*, 31 May 1919, 21 November 1920, 5 February 1921; *Socialist*, 21 August, 7 October 1920, February 1922; *Communist*, 7 May 1921.
- ⁸⁰ The situation surrounding the formation of the CLP in October 1920 was confused: Kendall (1969), pp.259–261; McKay (1994). Gallacher, although he became a member of the CLP, claimed his 'sole contribution' was to advance the merger into a unified Communist Party (*Worker*, 14 November 1920). The *Worker*, which Campbell edited, was instrumental in convening the founding conference of the CLP, which Campbell chaired. Years later, Campbell stated he had joined the CPGB in October 1920 (NAUK, KV2/1189, Information extracted from party registration card, 6 March 1952). It is possible that he was a member of both parties in 1920.
- ⁸¹ *Worker*, 28 June 1919, 16 October 1920; *Socialist*, 25 March 1920.
- ⁸² The former schoolmaster was convinced that the publicity accorded his namesake was intended to deceive workers into believing he himself was favourable to the CPGB: *Vanguard*, December 1920, *Socialist*, 3 February 1921. However, the Bridgeton McLean had been prominent in the CLP prior to that group's falling out with the dominie and wrote to the *Worker*, 20 November 1920, explaining the situation.
- ⁸³ *Communist* (organ of the Communist League), August 1919, gives his address as 22 Preston Street. The McLean family residing there included two Johns, father and son. The younger is the more probable candidate for CLP secretary: Glasgow Electoral Register, 1920; CS, 1901, 644/1.
- ⁸⁴ *Worker*, 14 June 1919; *Spur*, June, December 1920; *Worker*, 11 September, 16 October 1920.
- ⁸⁵ *Socialist*, 7 October 1920; CPA, CP/CENT/CONG/01/04, Report of Executive Committee to March 1922 Congress, p.1.
- ⁸⁶ *Clarion*, 28 February 1908; *Justice*, 2 October 1909; CEW, 1911, RD11/1, ED18. A Comintern commission advocating Esperanto may have been connected with Pratt's elevation to the EC: Mark Starr, 'Communism and an International Language', *Communist Review*, February 1922.
- ⁸⁷ *British Esperantist*, August 1927.
- ⁸⁸ *Call*, 10 October 1918.
- ⁸⁹ *Socialist*, 22 April 1920 (J.T. Murphy); Challinor (1977), pp.222–223; Shipway (1988), pp.74–75; Wilmslow (1996), pp.180–181.
- ⁹⁰ Branson (1985), p.10; CPA, CP/CENT/CONG/01/06, Report of Control Commission to Party Congress, May 1924, 15–16.
- ⁹¹ Willis was a frequent speaker at SDF meetings from the mid-1890s: e.g. *Justice*, 1 May, 1898, 13 May 1899. CEW, 1911, RD129/1, ED31; Kendall (1969), p.390, n.58.
- ⁹² *Call*, 15 July 1920, 6 October, 4 December 1919.
- ⁹³ CPA, CENT/CONG/01/02, Communist Unity Convention, p.46.
- ⁹⁴ *Call*, 27 May 1920
- ⁹⁵ CPA, CP/CENT/CONG/01/04, Report of Executive Committee to Congress, March 1922, p.12; CP/CENT/CONG/01/06, Report of Control Commission to Party Congress, May 1924, p.6.
- ⁹⁶ RGASPI, 495/100/544, Names and Particulars of Party Members Dismissed from Institutions, 31 May 1928.
- ⁹⁷ CPA, CP/CENT/CONG/01, Report of Second National Congress ... May 30–June 1, 1925; CP/CENT/CONG//02/02, Report of Ninth Congress ... 1927; CP/CENT/CONG/02/07, Report of Control Commission to 10th Congress; RGASPI, 495/100/544, Names and Particulars.

- ⁹⁸ CEW, 1891, RD Whitechapel, Mile End New Town, ED14; CEW, 1901, RD Whitechapel, Mile End New Town, ED12; CEW, 1911, RD18/1, ED22.
- ⁹⁹ Bush (1984), p.62; IWM – he worked as a ship’s electrician; Grant, 1954.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Call*, 8 April 1920. Later historians were not so sure: ‘Joe Vaughan of the C.P. flaunted the mayoral regalia and behaved like any other worshipful first citizen. He made pious speeches at municipal functions but militant speeches at strike meetings’ (Challinor, 1977, p.222).
- ¹⁰¹ RGASPI, 495/100/159, PB, 12 December 1924. He was also a delegate to the Comintern Congress in 1921.
- ¹⁰² CEW, 1911, RD10/4, ED10.
- ¹⁰³ Brunel University, London, Special Collections, Harry Young, *Harry’s Biography*, ‘My Cousin Fred’, p.5.
- ¹⁰⁴ Young, p.6; *Call*, 7, 28 March 1918; IWM.
- ¹⁰⁵ Young, p.6; RGASPI, 495/100/27, MacManus and Peet to ECCI, 15 November 1921; 495/100/69, MacManus and Peet to Comintern ECCI, 1 January 1922; CPA, CP/CENT/CONG/01/05, Report of Executive Committee ... October 1922.
- ¹⁰⁶ Young, p.6.
- ¹⁰⁷ CS, 1911, 405/1 6/25.
- ¹⁰⁸ *Daily Worker*, 22 March 1930.
- ¹⁰⁹ NRS, Statutory Register of Births (SRB), 644/2, 1237, William Paul, 11 August 1884; CS, 1901, 644/5, 37/20; CS, 1911, 560/18/19.
- ¹¹⁰ He was initially exempted for two months on ‘business grounds’: IWM; Hinton (1973), pp.301–2; Rowbotham (1986), *passim*; Murphy’s *The Workers’ Committee* (1917) was undoubtedly an important work, summarizing the conclusions to be drawn from the collective wartime experience, but Murphy was only a member of the SLP for some 18 months.
- ¹¹¹ Paul (1922); Bell (1941), pp.156–59; Challinor (1977), pp.206–9; RGASPI, 495/100/27, A. MacManus and A. Inkpin to Kobetsky, 15 March 1921.
- ¹¹² Thorpe (2000a), p.81; RGASPI, 495/100/243, Materials Relating to the *Sunday Worker*; A. Inkpin to E.H. Brown, 20 February, 23 July 1925; 495/100/339, Murphy to CPGB, October 1926. Paul stood unsuccessfully at Rusholme as a Labour candidate in December 1923 and as a Communist in October 1924 (Klugmann, 1966, pp.361, 368). He remained a member of its executive until the demise of the Plebs League.
- ¹¹³ ‘On local circumstances, where we are on the spot, we are the people to decide’ (Communist Unity Convention, p.41); Klugmann (1966), p.46.
- ¹¹⁴ At times exhibiting confusion. Macintyre (1980, p.114) observes Paul asserting in determinist terms in 1920 that capitalism must collapse; claiming in 1921 that Communists did not believe capitalism must automatically collapse; and reverting in 1922 to his 1920 formulation.
- ¹¹⁵ As the rancour and *realpolitik* of Communist politics revealed themselves, one wonders whether Paul reflected on his sentiments after the Foundation Convention: ‘it seemed as though every one of us desired to bury that malicious bigotry and personal animus which in some quarters seems to be the only criterion of revolutionary faith’ (*Communist*, 5 August 1920).
- ¹¹⁶ CEW, 1911, RD1/4, ED3.
- ¹¹⁷ CPA, CP/CENT/CONG/01/04, Report of Executive to March 1922 Conference, p.6.
- ¹¹⁸ NRS, SRB, 605/120, John Laughlan Leckie, 17 May 1887; CS, 1891, 605/3/5; Jack V. Leckie, Draft Registration Card, Chicago, 5 June 1917.
- ¹¹⁹ *Socialist*, 7 October 1920; *Worker*, 26 July 1919; Campbell (2000), pp.166, 183, n.180. Flanagan (1991, p.106) suggests that at some point, Leckie was a member of the SLP. In 1919, there were around 75 Sinn Féin branches in the West of Scotland. The Scottish Brigade of the IRA consisted of 5 battalions and a police report talked of 30,000 volunteers, 20,000 revolvers and 2,000 rifles (O’Catháin, 2008, pp.114–126).
- ¹²⁰ *Worker*, 21 August, 16 October 1920.
- ¹²¹ RGASPI, 495/100/233, PB, 14 January 1925; 495/100/349, PB, 8 April 1926; 495/100/497, PB, 9, 16 March 1928; NAUK, KV2/2683, Ernest Woolley, Reports, 27 February, 1 April 1930. MacDougall (1981, p.171, n.24) states that Leckie became a Central European representative of a tobacco firm. This may have been a cover story or go some way to explaining his spells in Germany.
- ¹²² CEW, 1911, RD505/4, ED11; RGASPI, 495/100/351, Org Bureau (OB), 17 March 1926; CPA, CP/CENT/CONG/01/08, Executive Report to Eighth National Congress, CPGB, 1926.
- ¹²³ CS, 1911, 685/2, 2/59; *Communist*, 12 August 1920; CPA, CP/CENT/CONG/01/07, Report of Seventh National Congress, CPGB, 1925.
- ¹²⁴ CEW, 1911, RD558/5, ED15; *Communist*, 7, 21 October 1920; Watson (2014), pp.33–35, 47.
- ¹²⁵ *Sunderland Daily Echo*, 17 November 1921.
- ¹²⁶ *The Times*, 6 October 1921; *Hartlepool and Northern Daily Mail*, 5 October 1921; *Sunderland Daily Echo*, 17 November 1921; Watson (2014), pp.27, 32, 76–77, 84; Roberts (1926), p.96.
- ¹²⁷ Findings from genealogical sources, neglected by many historians, may be more tentative than those based on conventional documents.

¹²⁸ RGASPI, 495/38/1, Hannington citing Gallacher.

¹²⁹ RGASPI, 495/100/51, Borodin to Praesidium of the Comintern, 24 June 1922.

¹³⁰ RGASPI, 495/38/1, Dutt.

¹³¹ RGASPI, 495/38/1, Dutt. Inkpin branded Dutt's account 'a travesty of the facts', asserting Dutt was as much to blame for the problems as any EC member.

¹³² RGASPI, 495/38/1, Newbold.

¹³³ RGASPI, 495/38/1, Dutt.

¹³⁴ RGASPI, 495/38/1, Newbold.

References

- Abrams, P. (1982). *Historical sociology*. Shepton Mallet: Open Books.
- Allen, J. (1986). Montefiore, Dorothy Francis, Dora (1851–1933). *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. X. [retrieved from <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/montefiore-dorothy-frances-dora-7626>]
- Barnsby, G. (1998). *Socialism in Birmingham and the Black Country, 1850–1939*. Wolverhampton: Integrated Publishing Services.
- Beech, D. (1943). *Torpedoed and other short stories*. London: Progressive Publishing.
- Bell, T. (1941). *Pioneering days*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Bornstein, S. & Richardson, A. (1986). *Against the stream: A history of the Trotskyist movement in Britain, 1924–38*. London: Socialist Platform.
- Bowley, A. L. (1900). *Wages in the United Kingdom in the nineteenth century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Braddock, J. & Braddock, B. (1963). *The Braddocks*. London: MacDonald.
- Branson, N. (1985). *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1927–1941*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Bullock, I. (2011). *Romancing the revolution: The myth of soviet democracy and the British left*. Athabasca: University of Athabasca Press.
- Bush, J. (1984). *Behind the lines: East London labour, 1914–1919*. London: Merlin Press.
- Callaghan, J. (1993). *Rajani Palme Dutt: A study in British Stalinism*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Campbell, A. (2000). *The Scottish miners, 1874–1939, vol. 2: Trade unions and politics*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Challinor, R. (1977). *The origins of British Bolshevism*. London: Croom Helm.
- Cole, M. (1973). Mellor, William (1888–1942). In J. M. Bellamy & J. Saville (Eds.), *Dictionary of Labour Biography* [hereafter *DLB*] (Vol. IV, pp. 123–27). London and Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Collette, C. (1987). Socialism and scandal: The sexual politics of the early labour movement. *History Workshop Journal*, 23(1), 102–111.
- Connole, N. (1961). *Leaven of life: The story of George Henry Fletcher*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Corthorn, P. (2006). *In the shadow of the dictators: The British left in the 1930s*. London: I.B. Taurus.
- Crick, M. (1994). *The history of the Social Democratic Federation*. Keele: Ryburn Publishing.
- Cronin, J. E. (1984). *Labour and society in Britain, 1918–1979*. London: Batsford.
- Darlington, R. (1998). *The political trajectory of J.T. Murphy*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Davies, S. (2004). Braddock, John [Jack] (1892–1963). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, [hereafter *ODNB*] online.

Document: Communist Party affiliation to the Labour Party: Transcript of the meeting of 29 December 1921. (1974). *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, 29, 16–34.

Doonan, G. (2014). *The IRA in Britain: 'In the heart of enemy lines'*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Duncan, R. (2004). Gallacher, William (1881–1965). *ODNB* online.

Edwards, W. N. (1938). *History of the South Wales Miners' Federation, vol. 1*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Egan, D. (1996). 'A cult of their own': Syndicalism and *The Miners' Next Step*. In A. Campbell, N. Fishman & D. Howell, (Eds.), *Miners, unions and politics, 1910–47*. Aldershot: Scolar Press.

Flanagan, R. (1991). *'Parish-fed bastards': A history of the unemployed in Britain, 1884–1939*. New York: Greenwood Press.

Foster, R. F. (2014). *Vivid faces: The revolutionary generation in Ireland, 1890–1923*. London: Allen Lane.

Grant, B. (1954). *The story of Joe Vaughan, first Labour Mayor of Bethnal Green*. London: East London Area Communist Party Committee.

Griffin, A. R. (1962). *The miners of Nottinghamshire, 1914–1944: A history of the Nottinghamshire miners' unions*. London: George Allen and Unwin.

Hinton, J. (1973). *The first shop stewards' movement*. London: George Allen and Unwin.

Hinton, J. (1983). *Labour and socialism: A history of the British labour movement, 1867–1974*. Brighton: Wheatsheaf.

Hinton, J., & Hyman, R. (1975). *Trade unions and revolution: The industrial politics of the early British Communist Party*. London: Pluto Press.

Holton, B. (1976). *British syndicalism, 1900–1914*. London: Pluto Press.

Hunt, K. (2001). Dora Montefiore: A different communist. In J. McIlroy, K. Morgan & A. Campbell (Eds.), *Party people, Communist lives: Explorations in biography* (pp. 29–50). London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Hunt, K. (2018). Censorship and self-censorship: Revisiting the Belt case in the making of Dora Montefiore. *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 27 [retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.8111>].

Jones, R. F. (1991). *Anti-parliamentarianism and Communism in Britain, 1917–1921* [retrieved from <http://www.af-north.org/other%20pamphlets/jonesintro.htm>].

Keats-Rohan, K.S.B. (Ed.). (2007). *Prosopography approaches and applications: A handbook*. Oxford: P & G Publications.

Kendall, W. (1969). *The revolutionary movement in Britain, 1900–1921*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Klehr, H. (1978). *Communist cadre: The social background of the American Communist Party elite*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

Klugmann, J. (1969). *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain: Vol. 1, formation and early years, 1919–1924*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Laybourn, K., & Murphy, D. (1999). *Under the red flag: A history of Communism in Britain*. Stroud: Sutton.

Lerner, S. (1961). *Breakaway unions and the small trade union*. London: George Allen and Unwin.

Lewis, R. (1993). *Leaders and teachers: Adult education and the challenge of Labour in South Wales*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.

Lloyd, J. (1990). *Light and liberty: A history of the EETPU*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

- MacDougall, I. (Ed.). (1981). *Militant miners: Recollections of John McArthur, Buckhaven, and letters, 1924–26, of David Proudfoot, Methil, to G. Allen Hutt*. Edinburgh: Polygon Press.
- Macfarlane, L. J. (1966). *The British Communist Party: Its origins and development until 1929*. London: MacGibbon and Kee.
- Macintyre, S. (1980). *A proletarian science: Marxism in Britain, 1917–1933*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mahon, J. (1976). *Harry Pollitt: A biography*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Mannheim, K. (1952). The problem of generations. In Karl Mannheim, *Essays on the sociology of knowledge* (pp. 276–320). London: Routledge.
- Martin, D. E. (1993). Fletcher, George Henry (1879–1958). In J.M. Bellamy & J. Saville (Eds.). *DLB* (Vol. IX, pp. 83–91). Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Martin, D., & Saville, J. (1984). Malone, Cecil John L'Estrange (1890–1965). In J. M. Bellamy & J. Saville (Eds.). *DLB* (Vol. VII, pp. 159–165). Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Martin, R. (1969). *Communism and the British trade unions, 1924–1933: A study of the National Minority Movement*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- McIlroy, J., & Campbell, A. (2005). The British and French representatives to the Communist International, 1920–1939: A comparative survey. *International Review of Social History*, 50, 203–240.
- McIlroy, J., & Campbell, A. (2019). Towards a prosopography of the American Communist elite: The foundation years, 1919–1923. *American Communist History*, 18 (3–4), 175–217.
- McIlroy, J., & Campbell, A. (2020). The leadership of American Communism, 1924–1929: Sketches for a prosopographical portrait. *American Communist History*, 19 (1–2), 1–50.
- McKay, J. (1994). Communist unity and division: 1920 and the ‘unholy Scotch current’. *Scottish Labour History Society Journal*, 29, 84–97.
- McKibbin, R. (1991). Why was there no Marxism in Britain? In R. McKibbin, *The ideologies of class: Social relations in Britain, 1880–1950* (pp. 1–41). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Millar, J. P. M. (1979). *The Labour College movement*. London: NCLC Publishing Society.
- Milton, N. (1973). *John Maclean*. London: Pluto Press.
- Morgan, K. (1993). *Harry Pollitt*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Morgan, K. (2006). *Labour legends and Russian gold*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Morgan, K, Cohen, G., & Flinn, A. (2007). *Communists in British society, 1920–1991*. London: Rivers Oram.
- Montefiore, D. B. (1927). *From a Victorian to a modern*. London: E. Archer.
- Murphy, J. T. (1941). *New horizons*. London: The Bodley Head.
- Murphy, J. T. (1917; 1972). *The workers’ committee: An outline of principles and structure*. London: Pluto Press.
- National Industrial Conference Board. (1921). *Wages in Great Britain, France and Germany*. New York: The Century Co.
- O’Catháin, M. (2008). A winnowing spirit: Sinn Féin in Scotland, 1905–38. In M. J. Mitchell (Ed.). *New perspectives on the Irish in Scotland* (pp. 114–126). Edinburgh: Birlinn.
- Parker, L. (2018). *Communists and Labour: The National Left-Wing Movement, 1925–1929*. London: Rotten Elements.
- Paul, W. (1917; 1977). *The state: Its origin and function*. Edinburgh: Proletarian Publishing.
- Paul, W. (1922). *Communism and society*. London: CPGB.
- Pelling, H. (1958). *The British Communist Party: A historical profile*. London: A.&C. Black.
- Phelps Brown, H. (1986). *The origins of trade union power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pimlott, B. (1977). *Labour and the left in the 1930s*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Pollitt, H. (1940). *Serving my time*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Riddell, J. (Ed.). (2015). *To the masses: Proceedings of the third congress of the Communist International, 1921*. Leiden: Brill.
- Roberts, N. H. (1926). *The Socialist network*. London: Boswell.
- Rowbotham, S. (1986). *Friends of Alice Wheeldon*. London: Pluto Press.
- Savage, M., & Miles, A. (1994). *The remaking of the British working class, 1840–1940*. London: Routledge.
- Saville, J. (1977). Shaw, Fred (1881–1951). In J. M. Bellamy & J. Saville (Eds.), *DLB* (Vol. IV, pp. 156–160). Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Shipway, M. (1988). *Anti-Parliamentary Communism: The movement for workers' councils in Britain, 1917–45*. Houndmills: Macmillan.
- Squires, M. (1990). *Saklatvala: A political biography*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Stenton, M., & Lees, S. (1981). *Who's who of British MPs, Vol. IV, 1945–1979*. Hassocks: Harvester Press.
- Stone, L. (1987). Prosopography. In L. Stone, *The past and present revisited* (pp. 45–73). London: Routledge Kegan Paul.
- Tate, T. (2018). *Hitler's British traitors: The secret history of spies, saboteurs and fifth columnists*. London: Icon Books.
- The Labour Who's Who* (1924). London: Labour Publishing Co.
- Thorpe, A. (2000a). *The British Communist Party and Moscow, 1920–1943*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Thorpe, A. (2000b). The membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920–1945. *Historical Journal*, 43 (3), 777–800.
- Verboven, K., Carlier, M., & Dumolyn, J. (2007). A short manual to the art of prosopography. In K. S. B. Keats-Rohan (Ed.), *Prosopography approaches and applications: A handbook* (pp. 35–69). Oxford: P & G Publications.
- Watson, D. (2014). *No justice without a struggle: The National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement in the North-East of England, 1920–1940*. London: Merlin.
- Weller, K. (1985). *'Don't be a soldier': The radical anti-war movement in north London, 1914–1918*. London: Journeyman Press.
- Werskey, G. (1978). *The visible college: A collective biography of British scientists and socialists of the 1930s*. London: Free Association Books.
- Wilmslow, B. (1996). *Sylvia Pankhurst: Sexual politics and political activism*. London: UCL Press.
- Wood, N. (1959). *Communism and the British intellectuals*. London: Victor Gollancz.

Table 1. Provisional Executive Committee elected at CPGB Foundation Conference, 31 July – 1 August 1920.

Tom Bell (CUG, SLP)*; George Deer (BSP); Will Hewlett (South Wales Communist Council); Fred Hodgson (BSP); Albert Inkpin (BSP), Secretary; Arthur MacManus (CUG, SLP), Chairman; Cecil L'Estrange Malone (BSP)*; William Mellor (Guild Communists)*; Dora Montefiore (BSP)*; William Paul (CUG, SLP); Fred Shaw (BSP)*; Bob Stewart (Socialist Prohibition Fellowship)*; Alfred A. Watts (BSP), Treasurer; Fred Willis (BSP).

Note: * = Elected at the Conference. The remainder were group representatives on the Provisional Committee which had finalized preparations for the Conference.

Abbreviations: BSP: British Socialist Party; CUG: Communist Unity Group; SLP: Socialist Labour Party

Source: Labour History Archive and Study Centre, Manchester, Communist Party Archive (CPA), CP/CENT/CONG/01/02, Communist Unity Convention, July 31–August 1, 1920, Official Report.

Table 2. Provisional Executive Committee elected at Unity Convention (Second Congress of the CPGB), 29–30 January 1921

Dick Beech (CP: BSTI); Will Hewlett (Wales); Fred Hodgson (CPGB); Albert Inkpin (CPGB, Secretary); Ferdinand L. Kerran (CPGB); William Kirker (Scotland); Jack V. Leckie (CLP); Joe MacDonald (CLP); Arthur MacManus (CPGB, Chairman); John McLean (Scotland); William Mellor (CPGB); Dora Montefiore (CPGB); J.T. Murphy (CPGB); William Paul (CPGB); Joseph J. Vaughan (CPGB); Tom J. Watkins (Wales); Alfred A. Watts (CPGB); Harry Webb (CPGB); Edgar T. Whitehead (CP-BSTI)

Note: The Committee was elected via a mix of appointment by the constituent parties and election by members grouped in regional divisions.

Abbreviations: CLP: Communist Labour Party; CP-BSTI: Communist Party (British Section Third International).

Source: *Communist*, 5 February 1921; L.J. Macfarlane, *The British Communist Party: Its origin and development until 1929* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1966), 67; James Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, vol. 1: Formation and early years, 1919–1924* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1969), 69.

Table 3. Executive Committee Elected at the Third Congress ('Special Rules Conference') of the CPGB, 23–24 April 1921

John Bird; Jack Braddock; Bill Brain; A.E. Cook; George Deacon; George Fletcher; Owen Ford; Fred Hodgson; Albert Inkpin (Secretary); Patrick Lavin; William McKie; Arthur MacManus (Chair); John McLean; J.W. Pratt; George H. Shillitoe; Tom J. Watkins; Harry Webb; George Wheeler.

Note: Between April 1921 and March 1922, Alexander McGeachan, Fred Silvester, James Cameron and Mrs Thomas replaced John McLean (resigned), Owen Ford (appointed as organizer), George Wheeler and Tom J. Watkins.

Source: Macfarlane, *British Communist Party*, 74.

Table 4. Executive Committee elected at Fourth Congress of CPGB, 18–19 March 1922

John Bird; Jack Braddock; Bill Brain; James E. Cameron; A.E. Cook; George Deacon; George H. Fletcher; Fred Hodgson; Patrick Lavin; Alexander McGeachan; William McKie; J.W. Pratt; George H. Shillitoe; Mrs A. Thomas; Harry Webb.

Officials: Tommy Jackson (Editor, *Communist*); J.T. Murphy and Nat Watkins (RILU); Harry Young (YCL); Tom Bell (National Organizer); Arthur MacManus (Chairman); William Gallacher (Deputy Chairman); Albert Inkpin (Secretary); Fred H. Peet (Assistant Secretary).

Abbreviations: RILU: Red International of Labour Unions; YCL: Young Communist League

Source: CPA, CP/CENT/CONG/01/05, Annual Party Conference, October 1922, Report of National Executive Committee.

Table 5. Executive Committee elected at Fifth Congress of CPGB, 7-9 October 1922

Tom Bell (PB secretary); George Deacon (OB); Rajani Palme Dutt (PB); William Gallacher (OB); Albert Inkpin (OB secretary); Arthur MacManus (PB); J.T. Murphy (PB); Harry Pollitt (OB); Bob Stewart (PB).

Abbreviations: OB: Organization Bureau; PB: Political Bureau

Sources: CPA, CP/CENT/CONG/01/06, Sixth Conference of the CPGB, March 17–19, 1924, Report of Central Committee

Table 6. Geographical distribution of CPGB membership by party district as percentage of total membership, February and June 1922, compared with the geographical distribution by residence of the EC sample, 1920–1923.

Date	London	Scotland	Lancashire	South Wales	Midlands	Yorkshire	Tyneside	Other	N =
Feb.	31.4	24.0	20.7	9.7	6.5	5.3	2.5	0.0	3,970
June	29.3	23.5	19.5	11.7	5.9	7.0	3.0	0.1	5,116
Average Feb. & June	30.4	23.8	20.1	10.7	6.2	6.2	2.8	0.1	4,453
CEC	34.0	23.4	6.4	6.4	10.6	12.8	4.3	2.1	47

Source: Derived from Andrew Thorpe, 'The membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920–1945', *Historical Journal*, 43 (3), 2000, pp. 781, 790, and Appendix to this article.

Table 7. Previous affiliations of CPGB leaders 1920–1923

Organization	Number of leaders who were members at some point
British Socialist Party	18
Clarion movement	1
Communist Labour Party	4
Communist League	1
Communist Party-British Section of the Third International	3
Communist Unity Group	9
Fife Communist League	1
Glasgow Communist Group (Parkhead)	1
Guild Communists	2
Herald League	2
Independent Labour Party	9
Industrial Workers of Great Britain	3
Industrial Workers of the World	3
Labour Abstentionist Party	1
Liberal Party	2
Miners' Reform Committees	5
National Shop Stewards and Workers' Committee Movement and local workers' committees	15
Scottish Prohibition Party/Socialist Prohibition Fellowship	1
Social Democratic Federation/Social Democratic Party	8
Socialist Labour Party	16
Socialist Party of Great Britain	1
South Wales Communist Council	2
South Wales Socialist Society	1
Workers' Socialist Federation	2

Notes.

1. Multiple affiliations of individuals are listed separately, e.g an individual's membership of a local workers' committee and the NSS&WCM are counted twice.
2. While some leaders were members of both the SDF and BSP, others were members of one or the other; therefore, these affiliations are listed separately.

Table 8. CPGB leaders, 1920–1923, with higher education

Name	Institution	Qualification
George Deacon	University College, Reading	Unknown
Rajani Palme Dutt	Balliol College, University of Oxford	BA, 1 st Class Honours in Classics
John Cecil L'Estrange Malone	Royal Naval College, Dartmouth; Royal Naval College, Greenwich	Graduated as naval officer, 1905
William Mellor	Exeter College, University of Oxford	BA
Edgar Thoreau Whitehead	St Paul's College, Cheltenham; University of London	Graduated 1910

Table 9. Rate of turnover on CPGB ECs, January 1921–October 1922

Committee	Total membership	Number who served on the previous committee	Number of newcomers	Percentage newcomers
January 1921	19	8	11	57.9
April 1921	22	6	16	72.7
March 1922	24	16	6	33.3
October 1922	9	6 (7*)	3 (2*)	33.3 (22.2*)

Note. * Bob Stewart had not served on the previous committee as he had been in Moscow but had sat on an earlier committee.

Table 10. Communist leaders, 1920–1923, elected to subsequent ECs

	1924	1925	1926	1927	Jan. 1929	Dec. 1929	Total
Tom BELL	√	√	√	√	√	x	5
Bill BRAIN	√	x	x	√	x	x	2
George DEACON	√	x	x	x	x	x	1
Rajani Palme DUTT	√	√	√	√	√	√	6
William GALLACHER	√	√	√	√	√	√	6
Albert INKPIN	√	√	√	√	√	x	5
Tommy JACKSON	√	√	√	√	√	x	5
Arthur MacMANUS	√	√	√	Deceased			3
J.T. MURPHY	√	√	√	√	√	√	6
Harry POLLITT	√	√	√	√	√	√	6
Bob STEWART	√	√	√	√	√	√	6
Nat WATKINS	√	√	√	√	x	x	4
Harry WEBB	x	x	x	x	x	√	1

Sources: James Klugmann, *The history of the Communist Party of Great Britain, vol. 2: The general strike 1925–26* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1969) 359–363; Noreen Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1927–1941*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985), Appendix.