

**‘Class Against Class’: The Leadership of the Communist Party of Great Britain during the Comintern’s Third Period, 1928–1934**

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### **Abstract**

*A prosopographical survey employed statistical analysis of data detailing the origins, occupations, prior affiliations, political careers and destinations of the 66 leading Communists who served on the Central Committee (CC) of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) during the Comintern's Third Period, 1928–1934. There was significant innovation in composition: consonant with transformed politics, around 62% of CC representatives were newcomers, turnover accelerated significantly compared with 1923–1927 and the Old Guard was discarded. The committees were younger, although mean age only declined from 37 to 34 years, and female representation more than doubled. The CC remained overwhelmingly working-class – slightly more than in earlier years – with strong representation from skilled manual workers and miners. Only a small minority met the Comintern prescription that the committee be revitalised by electing factory militants; by the end of the Third Period, 90% of members were paid party workers. Short-term change failed to produce enduring renewal of the Communist leadership. Some 75% of Newcomers during the 'Class Against Class' years failed to survive beyond them as CC representatives, with negative implications for the construction of an experienced cadre. A core of 12 who served before, during and after the Third Period was reinforced by 10 Newcomers who continued in the leadership after 1934. In succeeding decades, none of them challenged in prominence and prestige the core of leaders in place prior to 1929.*

## **Introduction: Stalinism as ultra-leftism**

The Third Period of the Comintern was underpinned by a schematic and deterministic conception of history which sat uneasily with its political voluntarism. It figured in Soviet futurology as a prelude to the demise of capitalism and triumph of international revolution. The Comintern's prophetic scenario looked back to the years immediately following the organisation's creation in 1919 as the initial phase of an epoch of wars and revolution which would witness transformative struggles between a declining capitalism and a working class animated by the Russian revolution. The first period was depicted as a time of systemic crisis which provided workers with unparalleled opportunities to launch a final assault against the ruling class, emulate the Bolsheviks and seize power. Prospects dimmed from late 1921 and the defeat of the German insurrection of 1923 foreclosed on immediate advance. The second period was one of modest capitalist recovery. It required Communist parties to consolidate and augment their forces through united front initiatives – temporary alliances with competing working-class currents while maintaining independence and criticism under the banner, 'March separately, strike together' (Carr, 1966; McDermott & Agnew, 1996, pp. 27–40).

The Third Period represented a sharp break with its predecessor. Its first postulate was the disintegration of stability and reappearance of crisis. Imperialist rivalries would turn into armed conflict between the major powers; attempts to restore capitalism in the Soviet Union would accompany economic and political turbulence across Europe. Capitalist crisis would be exacerbated by a second factor, the leftward swing of the masses. Marshalled by the Comintern, this would bring workers to the brink of revolution. Matters were complicated by the ruling class response. Concentration of capital was stimulating integration with the state. The threat of revolution prompted a turn to corporatism and co-option of reformist leaders. As the ranks radicalised, leaders of social democratic parties and reformist trade unions were

impelled to protect their material and institutional interests by managing their members to preserve capitalism and the privileges it accorded them (Carr, 1976–1978; Carr, 1982; McDermott & Agnew, 1996, pp. 81–119; Tucker, 1990).<sup>1</sup>

More far-fetched was the theory of social fascism. As the ripples of Mussolini's triumph in Rome radiated across Europe, Soviet leaders pondered whether capital would enlist fascism to discipline the working class in a deteriorating economic, social and political situation. As early as 1924, Stalin followed Zinoviev in suggesting reformists would look in a similar direction. Four years on and social fascism became the third pillar of the Third Period. Social democracy was revealed as the left wing of fascism. Its leadership and the union bureaucracy were mutating into 'social fascists', a metamorphosis particularly virulent in the case of left reformism whose mission was to divert workers from revolution. 'Fascisation' proceeded at different tempos according to the specific problems encountered by capitalists nationally. Social fascism was in 'the caterpillar stage' in Britain, 'the butterfly stage' in Germany; but the dangers could not be underestimated. Social Democracy and Fascism were, as Stalin put it, not antipodes but twins (Draper, 1969, 1972).

The fourth component, prescriptions for practice, flowed from this analysis. There could no longer be a united front with social fascist leaders – only alliances 'from below' with their members. The new phase required resumption of the offensive. Mustering the working class, Communists, flying solo, would mount unremitting and direct assaults on the social fascists, the major impediment to transforming collaboration into resistance and resistance into revolution. The watchword was 'independent leadership' exercised by the Communists. There was little point in working inside or with reformist formations when their leaders were moving towards fascism; or attempting to pressurise the union bureaucracy to lead struggles. Where the latter had forfeited the confidence of their members, it was necessary to assemble left-moving workers to split reformist unions and replace them with

revolutionary syndicates. To equip themselves to lead impending, epochal struggles, Communist parties had to revitalise themselves. It was imperative to recruit new layers of insurgent workers steeled in combat at the point of production, replace conservative leaderships, out of touch with new developments, with ‘fighting elements’ and guard against ‘the right danger’ – the tendency to cling to outmoded ideas and opportunist tactics which disabled the old leaderships from seizing historic opportunities (McIlroy, 2015, pp. 541–543; McIlroy & Campbell, 2002a, pp. 535–538).

Like its united front predecessor, and every other major Comintern turn, ‘the new line’ of mobilisation for revolution, ‘Class Against Class’, underwent adjustment through the six or so years it endured as it encountered inconvenient realities and unforeseen eventualities.<sup>2</sup> In Marxist terms, it had little to commend it. There was scant evidence in 1928 that capitalism was heading for the precipice, or that economic turmoil would take the form it did – although the 1929 Crash provided powerful legitimisation for Stalin’s apocalyptic script. Catastrophism was more conspicuous than sober analysis. Substantiation for assertion of the impact of the Crash in galvanising consciousness was lacking. The radicalisation that did occur rarely reflected a significant turn to revolution or the Communist parties. Causality, connection, convincing links between crisis, consciousness and working-class advance, were largely absent from Third Period essentialism. The idea that economic turbulence depressed rather than boosted revolutionary consciousness, the view that confidence and militancy were more frequently associated with economic upturn, were dismissed. Little account was taken of evidence that while declining wages and long-term unemployment might provoke a left-wing response, intensified exploitation and oppression could also increase competition and divisions between workers and promote demoralisation and quiescence. The Labour leaders certainly displayed timidity and collaborative attitudes. Their evolution into social fascists owed more to myth than Marxism. Lenin recognised the degree to which reformist leaders

were attracted to partnership with capital and the state. Stalin's theory of social fascism eliminated functional imperatives motivating them to oppose the atomisation of the working class and the annihilation of their organisations and status fascism promised; it glossed over their working-class base and its material interest in fighting fascist dictatorship. Prohibition of a united front flowed from a one-sided conception of reformism which facilitated the advance of fascism.<sup>3</sup>

Since 1920, British revolutionaries had witnessed successive reverses which culminated in the defeat of the 1926 General Strike: sustained decline of trade unionism; continued support for rightward-moving leaders; the marginality of the CPGB; and a turn to Labour in search of reformist not revolutionary solutions (Clegg, 1985, pp. 312–511; Hinton, 1983, pp. 119–148; Hinton & Hyman, 1975; Ives, 2017). Trotsky pointed out in 1930:

The economic situation in Britain has become extremely acute. Still the political superstructure of this arch-conservative country lags extraordinarily behind the changes in the economic basis. Before reverting to new political forms and methods, all the classes of the British nation are attempting to ransack the old storerooms to turn the old clothes of their grandfathers and grandmothers inside out. The fact remains that despite the dreadful national decline, there does not exist in Britain as yet either a revolutionary party of any significance or its antipode, a fascist party. Thanks to these circumstances, the bourgeoisie has had the opportunity to mobilise the majority of the people under the 'national' banner. (Trotsky, 1975, p. 79)

Communist insistence that initiatives to secure co-operation between employers and trade unionists mounted by the industrialist, Sir Alfred Mond, in 1928–1929 represented the emergence of social fascism; that in a country where fascism was marginal, Ramsay MacDonald, Philip Snowden, Jimmy Thomas, Ernest Bevin and Walter Citrine were pursuing identical goals to Mussolini and Hitler utilising different methods; that the National Government of 1931 was bent on destroying working-class organisation and incorporating its remnants; that the ILP leaders represented social fascism at its most dangerous, involved a debilitating departure from recent Marxist analysis of the contradictory nature of reformism. The Third Period had negligible application to Britain and little to do with Leninism. It

derived from ‘Leninism’, the burgeoning state ideology which reflected the developing ascendancy of Stalinism in the Soviet Union and legitimated the interests and policies of an emerging elite dedicated to modernisation and ‘socialism in one country’. ‘Class Against Class’ originated as a response to events in Russia – not events in Britain or other countries where it was applied (McIlroy & Campbell, 2002a, p. 541).

Having overcome the Left and United Oppositions but confronting reverses abroad and economic impasse at home, Stalin pursued an aberrant variant of the programme of Trotsky and Zinoviev. His break with his cautious collaborator, Bukharin, went hand in hand with termination of the New Economic Policy, the Five-Year Plan, coercive industrialisation and elimination of the peasant problem through crash collectivisation. Fear of imperialist intervention to thwart this ‘revolution from above’ and its attempt to catch up with capitalism, drove Comintern policy. ‘Class Against Class’ was the corollary in the international arena of the struggle against the NEP men, kulaks, capitalist restorationists, monarchists, the left and right threats to Stalinism, inside the Soviet Union (Kotkin, 2017; McIlroy & Campbell, 2019, pp. 179–182; Tucker, 1977, 1990). Antagonism towards social democracy, impatience with its closure against Communism and the intractabilities of united front politics dovetailed with desire to harass the major powers to divert them from anti-Soviet initiatives. To suggest that the Third Period offensive was mounted purely for its nuisance value in terms of safeguarding Soviet security is to neglect the elements of leftism, indeterminacy and contingency in Stalinist thinking as well as the subjectivity of the leaders and members of national parties who implemented it. But the pursuit of revolution in Europe was neither central to first-phase Stalinism nor expected by Stalin. Comintern policy could not disregard the requirements of Soviet diplomacy and the mission of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs (Narkomindel) to cultivate equitable relations with capitalist states in order to protect ‘the second revolution’. Attention had to be paid to the danger of disrupting

international relations that the discourse of social fascism, ‘the war danger’ and looming European revolution held. Within the determining arc of shielding ‘socialism in one country’ and avoidance of external threats which ultimately governed both institutions, the contradictions between the policies of the Comintern and Narkomindel were managed, reconciled or temporarily tolerated. Where insurgency might provoke retaliation, even foreign intervention against Russia – as in the German case – the brakes were applied (Carr, 1982, particularly pp. 3–28; Haslam, 1983; McDermott & Agnew, 1996, pp. 94–98).

Under the complexities and nuances, bolstering the national parties’ role which had developed apace since 1924 as ‘frontier guards’ of the Soviet Union, was intrinsic to ‘socialism in one country’:

The class struggle in each country and the national liberation struggle of peoples oppressed by imperialism are still important factors in the world revolution, but the essential factor is the building of socialism in the USSR – hence the idea of ‘the leadership exercised over the whole world revolutionary movement by the proletarian dictatorship in the USSR’. (Claudin, 1975, p. 75)

Developments since 1924 culminated in the Stalinisation of Comintern affiliates. It was personified by the replacement of Bukharin as Comintern head by Stalin’s henchman, Molotov. It involved extinguishing factions and embedding ‘socialism in one country’. ‘The new line’ unfolded at the Ninth Plenum in February 1928, the Sixth World Congress that summer, and the Tenth Plenum in July 1929. It represented a challenge to a CPGB still tied to key aspects of the second period, and its advance was contested. The first instinct of most leaders, of whom J.R. Campbell was the most eloquent, was to question revision of the approach to the Labour Party adumbrated by Lenin in *Left-Wing Communism*. Too little had changed, they argued, and Moscow was exaggerating the left turn of the workers and magnifying a conjuncture less propitious than that of 1920. This was rejected by the leading theorist, Rajani Palme Dutt, and Harry Pollitt, who echoed Stalinist thinking. The consciousness of British workers, they claimed, had matured since 1920. Labour’s record,



emphatically its spell in office in 1924, had opened workers' eyes to its true nature; it had evolved from a 'bourgeois workers' party' into a bourgeois party, 'the third capitalist party'. Lenin's contradictions were ironed out: the CPGB's task was no longer to pressurise Labour, build the left within it and assist it into government to expose it, but to directly promote revolutionary politics by unremitting opposition and fielding the maximum number of revolutionaries in the coming general election, supporting only Labour candidates who endorsed Communist demands (Branson, 1985, pp. 19–25; Macfarlane, 1966, pp. 195–210).

The Comintern's optimistic estimation of workers' consciousness and the balance of forces between capital and labour, was refracted through the Moscow-cultivated leftism of leading British supporters. Dutt relied on abstract, *a priori* constructs. Pollitt demonstrated he was neither theorist nor pragmatist but epigone. Campbell and the initial majority were nearer the mark. But what ultimately counted was not their more judicious estimation of the conjuncture in Britain but the implicit faith in the political superiority of the Comintern they shared with their opponents. Under pressure from the Kremlin and its shock troops in the national and district leadership and the Young Communist League (YCL), by the Tenth Party Congress in January 1929, the party had fallen into line. Although it regarded some Central Committee (CC) representatives as vacillating and unreliable in their protestations of loyalty to 'the new line', the Comintern was slow to restructure the leadership – perhaps assuming the party would put its own house in order. Recalcitrants, such as the miners' leader, Arthur Horner, who still perceived the need to observe 'trade union legalism'; Wal Hannington, the leader of the National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement (NUWCM), equally conscious of the constraints mass work imposed; and the intellectual, Andrew Rothstein, who questioned revisionism on Labour, remained *in situ*, despite disparagement, notably from Dutt's co-thinker, Robin Page Arnot, and the YCL attack dogs, William Rust, Dave Springhall and Walter Tapsell (Thorpe, 2000a, pp. 135–137).

A frustrated Comintern took a tighter hold. Criticism was expressed in the *Closed Letter* sent to the party in February 1929 and at the Tenth Plenum in July (Macfarlane, 1966, pp. 308–319). Through the year, the basic principles of Third Period policy were amplified, augmented and embodied in party policy and practice. In March, the National Left Wing Movement, the CPGB's vehicle for intervening in the Labour Party was abandoned, followed by termination of the broad-left *Sunday Worker* (Parker, 2018, p. 93). Impatience with 'trade union legalism' saw the launch of the Communist-controlled United Clothing Workers' Union (UCW) in March and the following month, the second Red union, the United Mineworkers of Scotland (UMS). Both initiatives were based on over-optimistic readings of the policy adopted at the January Congress that revolutionary unions be formed when right-wing leaders had lost majority support (Campbell, 2000, pp. 289–306; Lerner, 1961, pp. 85–143).

In the May 1929 general election, the CPGB's 25 candidates campaigned for 'a Revolutionary Workers' Government' which would pursue federation with the USSR; they urged workers to abstain where no Communist or candidate backing Communist policy was standing (McIlroy & Campbell, 2002a, p. 541). The formative phase of 'Class Against Class' culminated at the Eleventh Congress at Leeds in December 1929, supervised by a Comintern delegation headed by future East German satrap, Walter Ulbricht. Policy was adjusted to take account of Comintern developments within the reiterated couplets: crisis – radicalisation; 'fascisation' of the Labour Party and union apparatus – 'independent' revolutionary leadership. Over half the CC elected ten months earlier were removed, the full-time staff was reorganised, and Pollitt subsequently emerged, with Stalin's *imprimatur*, as party leader – a move aimed at strengthening central direction and providing the party with a public face which could be cosmeticized for internal and external consumption (Thorpe, 2000a, pp. 148–149). The change was personified by Campbell: summoned to Moscow to overcome his

errors, by June 1930 he was publicly praising the Comintern, denouncing ‘right’ and ‘left’ deviations and characterising Britain as ‘one of the classic countries of social fascism’ (Carr, 1982, p. 208).

Belief ‘the new line’ had tenuous purchase in Britain and would intensify the isolation of an already feeble CPGB was vindicated. The context was recalcitrant. In the decisive sector of activity, union membership, which had declined from 8.2 million in 1920 to 5.1 million in 1926, dropped to 4.8 million in 1930 and 4.4 million in 1932 – at which point trade unionism embraced only 23% of the labour force, little over half the figure for 1920. Unemployment, 16% of insured workers in 1930, stood at 22% in 1932. There were 422 strikes in 1930 and 389 in 1932, compared with 1,607 in 1920 (Clegg, 1985, Table 7). Despite episodic upturns, the precursive, confidence-sapping setbacks provided a less than propitious environment for the CPGB’s dwindling industrial cadre – it was estimated in 1930 at least a third of members were out of work – to mobilise a class in retreat. Stalinist scripts overlooked the fact that depression, unemployment and contracting trade unionism rarely stimulate militancy while its potential midwives were on the defensive from the start of the offensive. The number of factory cells declined as Communists faced victimisation at work and bans and proscriptions in important unions. The CPGB’s union arm, the National Minority Movement (MM) was unravelling – its Annual Congress in August 1929 attracted fewer than half the union bodies who supported it a year earlier, while hubristic self-assertion as an alternative to the TUC alienated many (Branson, 1985, p. 74; Martin, 1969, pp. 16–19; McIlroy, 2016).

If anything, the party’s trajectory made matters worse. Demonisation of social fascist officials; refusal to accept majority decisions; attempts to circumvent union machinery by calls to place strikes under the direction of rank-and-file committees; indulgence in revolutionary rhetoric at the expense of demands which expanded on workers’ concerns; and

support for breakaways which cast Communists as ‘splitters’, produced few positive results (McIlroy, 2015, pp. 547–549).<sup>4</sup> For some, failure confirmed the bureaucracy was a tool of the employers and could not be forced to fight. Misunderstanding or disregarding Comintern instructions that winning forces inside the reformist unions was a pre-requisite of forming new ones, many abandoned activity within them. Social fascism, some concluded, was not exclusive to the leadership but infected union branches and the workplace (McIlroy & Campbell, 2002a, pp. 549–551). Leaders like Pollitt passed from denunciation to urging Communists to break up meetings addressed by union officials and put forward fantasy scenarios such as formation of a revolutionary United Mineworkers of Great Britain which would replace the existing and hard-fought-for Miners’ Federation (Campbell, 2000, pp. 335–338; McIlroy & Campbell, 2002a, p. 551).

The Comintern attempted to manage matters. The years from 1930 witnessed a series of interventions to adjust policy, clarify issues, address misunderstandings and correct excesses. It emphasised the need to agitate in the reformist unions; observe Comintern criteria; eschew the ‘schematic creation of new unions’; and prioritise concrete demands to mobilise workers rather than evangelism and ‘revolutionary phrase-mongering’. This was, theoretically at least, a pre-revolutionary situation; nonetheless, combatting ‘the right danger’ could in turn produce ‘left deviations’. Comintern efforts encountered limited success. Communist domination of the NUWCM – despite emphasis on the revolutionary potential of the jobless – provided little compensation for the CPGB’s depleted purchase in the unions (Campbell & McIlroy, 2008). The difficulty with initiatives from the Workers’ Charter in Autumn 1930 which enumerated specific demands, to the January Resolution of 1932 which sought to steady the ship, is that they were, likewise, formulated and functioned within the constrictive political linchpins of the proximity of revolution, radicalised workers and social fascism, which disabled progress (McIlroy, 2015). The problems were clearest in Germany,

where prohibition of a united front with the Social Democrats – which did not always extend to joint action with the Nazis – made its own contribution to Hitler’s success. So, in minor key, did the CPGB’s cheerleading of the German party’s suicidal course. But these problems applied, if less tragically, in Britain.<sup>5</sup>

Party membership fell from 9,000 in January 1927, a figure inflated by recruits from the miners’ struggle, to 5,000 in January 1928 and 3,500 in January 1929, briefly touching a probably padded 9,000 in January 1932 and oscillating between 5,000 and 5,600 between 1932 and 1934 (Thorpe, 2000a, Appendix A). Whatever the reliability of these figures, instability and high turnover of membership contributed to the volatility, disorganisation and isolation apparent from the primary materials. By 1934, the MM and the two new unions were, like the one questionable achievement, the *Daily Worker*, the subject of significant Comintern subsidy. It has been estimated that by August 1930 the CPGB, marginalised in the workplace, had dwindled to a core of 470 activists, 10% of whom were on the payroll (McIlroy & Campbell, 2002a, p. 558). It proved incapable of taking advantage of resistance to pay cuts and rationalisation in a number of industries or benefitting from divisions in Labour, the fall of MacDonald and formation of the National Government. The 25 Communist candidates in the 1929 general election averaged 2,025 votes and the 26 candidates in 1931, 2,877 votes, performances inferior to the party’s meagre achievements in the 1924 and 1935 contests (Macfarlane, 1966, pp. 229–231; Thorpe, 2000a, pp. 181–182).

If we date the Third Period from early 1928 – taking full stock of its ingredients and antecedents would entail a longer time frame – Thorpe has a point when he observes that the Comintern manifesto of March 1933, issued as Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, marked in substance the end – perhaps ‘the beginning of the end’ would be more precise – of ‘Class Against Class’ in Britain (Thorpe, 2000a, pp. 202–203). The statement authorised overtures to the Labour Party and TUC. However, it contradicted a policy which prohibited

united front campaigns with what were still deemed social fascists, a theory Stalin maintained into 1934. McDermott and Agnew also have a point when, discussing Stalin's green light for the leaders of the French party to present united front proposals to the Socialists a year later, they conclude: 'The "turn" in Comintern policy can thus be dated with some certainty from mid-May 1934' (McDermott & Agnew, 1996, p. 125). A more formal, institutional approach would arguably locate its demise at the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern which brought together developments since 1933 and dismissed the disaster as 'sectarianism' – without explaining what had occurred or who was responsible – and ratified the new Popular Front policy.

The Comintern underlined the centrality of leadership to 'Class Against Class'. The Bolsheviks had emphasised that the dialectic between painstaking appraisal of the objective situation and the agency of a party of generals in extracting the maximum from it to develop consciousness and mobilise workers, lay at the heart of revolutionary advance. Light-minded optimism, determinism, fatalism and passivity were pitfalls. But from 1928 the Stalinists misread the conjuncture: they embraced voluntarism, over-estimation of the subjective factor and adventurism. They inflated the revolutionary possibilities of the objective situation, exaggerated the part leadership could play, and when the existing cadre proved critical or ineffectual, demanded a new leadership centred on workplace militants. To what extent were they successful, how far was dramatic political change accompanied by transformation of the party hierarchy? Taking the CC as representative of the CPGB leadership (McIlroy & Campbell, 2020a, p. 425), this article seeks answers by examining the three committees elected between 1929 and 1932.<sup>6</sup> The context is important. An interventionist Comintern was determined to reinforce bureaucratic centralism and fashion a leadership capable of top-down implementation of its policy; and it deduced from the January 1929 Congress that revitalisation could not be left to the current leaders or rank-and-file democracy:

The new executive, [CC] chosen as a result of 'free elections', is to us a matter of great consternation ... The situation manifested at the Congress demanded, above all, that new elements be brought into the ranks of the executive. The Congress has shown that it is precisely in the British party that the danger arises that a small group of leaders may develop which will be insufficiently linked up with active party life and the active struggles of the workers. The present situation in the party demanded firstly that some of the leading comrades be allocated to local party work and secondly, that energetic comrades carrying out mass work in the localities be included in the central committee ... the fact is ... the composition of the central committee has remained practically unaltered and does not include leading workers from the workshops ... the central committee should consider the advisability of taking steps at the time of the next Congress to ensure that new elements, particularly comrades from the workshops, shall be elected to the central committee. (quoted Macfarlane, 1966, p. 315)

To attain these objectives, revised arrangements for electing the CC were adopted at the December 1929 Congress. Instead of,

the so-called 'democratic' open vote of Congress (really Social Democratic method because its only effect was to ensure the yearly re-election without an ounce of political discussion of those whose names had been prominently before the party) a Bolshevik method was adopted. (Robin Page Arnot, quoted Pelling, 1958, p. 52)

A nominations committee drew up a list of candidates based on their politics to be accepted or rejected en bloc by the Congress. To facilitate matters, the voting records of CC representatives over the previous two years were circulated and pressure exercised via a hailstorm of criticism of 'right wing' tendencies from the districts.<sup>7</sup> The Comintern, however, resisted calls for 'a complete clear out', opting for a blend of the best of the existing leadership and new militants which would guarantee 'a final and decisive break with the opportunist hesitations and vacillations of the past'.<sup>8</sup> A delegate recalled: 'The new leadership was chosen from above, not elected from below'; the criteria were:

understanding of the present period, their experience of the conduct of class battles and their carrying out the political tasks of the party [and] the more energetic fulfilment of the obligations that are imposed on our party as a section of the Communist International. (Groves, 1974, p. 25; Pollitt, 1929, p. 567)

In evaluating the results, we scrutinise the origins, social background, previous activities, prior affiliations and destinations of CC members, focussing on those new to the committee, many of whom have remained relatively unknown. Had they a history of

leadership in the factories and mines? How many existing representatives remained in place, who stepped down and how did they compare with the newcomers? How did the CCs elected in 1929 compare with each other and the 1932 committee in terms of composition, change and continuity? How did the elements of innovation and stability in the Third Period CCs compare with the committees before 1929? Adopting the prosopographical method employed in previous research on the CPGB leadership in the 1920s, this article discusses these and related questions (McIlroy & Campbell, 2020a, 2020b, 2021a, 2021b).

### **The Central Committee in the Third Period, 1929–34: a statistical profile**

The 66 Communists who served on the three CCs elected between January 1929 and November 1932 are listed in **Tables 1–3** and **Appendices 1–3**. The latter contain information from a range of sources: these include Comintern and CPGB files; biographical dictionaries and encyclopaedias; MI5 and Special Branch reports; the party and local press; individual memoirs; and genealogical websites.<sup>9</sup> The characteristics of the total CC population 1929–1935 are first outlined and compared with their predecessors in the years before 1929 and the wider party membership. We proceed to disaggregate this population and delineate and analyse discrete groupings within it based on their tenure on the CC. Finally, we consider the changing composition of each of the three CCs.

**[Insert Tables 1, 2 and 3 near here]**

#### **Continuity and innovation in the CPGB leadership**

Only ten of the 66 CC members, 15.2%, were women. This figure is in line with that in the party as a whole and represented an increase on the total of four women who had served on the committee between 1920 and 1928.<sup>10</sup> There was only one person of colour, Rajani Palme Dutt, compared with two, Dutt and Shapurji Saklatvala, in the preceding united front years.<sup>11</sup> Data is available concerning the nationality of 71 of the 74 Communists who sat on the CC



before 1929: just over 60% were English, almost 30% Scottish and 8.5% Welsh (McIlroy & Campbell, 2021b, p. 394). The Third Period representatives followed a similar pattern: 60.3% were English, 25.4% Scots, 12.7% Welsh, and one Russian-born, 1.6%. The mean age of the 74 Communists elected to the committee between 1920 and 1927 was 39 years (McIlroy & Campbell, 2021b, p. 394); their Third Period counterparts were younger, with a mean age of 36.0 years, although there was a marked difference between males (34.1 years) and females (38.3 years).

The party was overwhelmingly proletarian – it was claimed in March 1928 that 95% of members were working-class (Thorpe, 2000b, p. 786) – but this was not reflected in the CC population before 1929 when 17% had middle-class origins (McIlroy & Campbell, 2021b, p. 394). The Third Period CCs witnessed some shift towards a more working-class composition: 89.1% of their members came from working-class homes, 10.9% from middle-class backgrounds. The largest proportion of representatives' fathers were employed in skilled trades – 42.9% – followed by 26.9% in unskilled employment, 15.9% in clerical or professional roles and 14.3% miners. The primary occupations of committee members followed a broadly similar pattern to their fathers: 34.4% skilled manual workers, 25.0% unskilled manual, 18.8% miners and a similar percentage clerical and professional, while two (Cree and Crawford) were not in employment.

Aggregate analysis of the social characteristics of this disparate cohort conceals internal differentiation and change over time. It is distorted by the initially limited impact of 'Class Against Class' on the composition of the CC: the personnel of the January 1929 CC were very different from its successors. Disaggregation of the total population permits more detailed consideration of differences and similarities between Third Period CCs and their predecessors and it is possible to distinguish three groupings based on tenure on the committee. The first comprises activists elected in the 1920s who were not re-elected after

January 1929 or, in two cases, after December 1929. **Table 4** records the 13 members (19.7% of total) of what we have termed the ‘Old Guard’; and see **Appendix 1**. **[Insert Table 4 near here]** The second category consists of Communists who sat on the committee before 1929 and continued to do so after 1932. The 12 members (18.2% of the total) we have designated the ‘Continuity Group’ represented a significant strand of the leadership before, during and after the Third Period; see **Table 5** and **Appendix 2**. **[Insert Table 5 near here]**

The third and largest contingent, 41-strong (62.2% of total), represented ‘Newcomers’ who made their debut in 1929 or 1932: see **Table 6** and **Appendix 3**. They accounted for only 20% of the January 1929 CC, but this figure increased appreciably to 63.9% and 43.3% respectively of the December 1929 and November 1932 CCs. Consequently, the latter two committees were dominated by debutantes: from December 1929 to February 1935, approximately 70% of the leadership was made up of activists promoted since 1929 (See **Table 6**). This rate of turnover on CCs was higher than for the years 1923–1927, when the percentage of new representatives on the five committees ranged from 47.3% in 1923 (a figure explained in part by the expansion of the committee from nine to 17 members) to 16.7% in 1925 and 1927 with a mean of 28.4% (McIlroy & Campbell, 2021a, pp. 218–219). **[Insert Table 6 near here]** These Newcomers can be divided into two sub-categories: ‘Third Period Members’, 31 activists whose service on the CC was restricted to the committees elected in 1929 and 1932; and a much smaller contingent, ten ‘Third Period Survivors’ who were re-elected from 1935 onwards: see **Table 7**.

**[Insert Table 7 near here]**

The data in the tables and appendices permits us to map the similarities and contrasts between the different groups on the CC during the Third Period. Three of the Old Guard were born in the 1870s, five in the 1880s and five in the 1890s: see **Table 4**. The youngest, Turner, was 23 at the time of the Russian Revolution. By 1930, a number were middle-aged by

interwar standards; the mean age of this category was 43.8 years. With the marginal exception of Glading, who joined in 1922, and Loeber, whose entry point is unknown, all were foundation members. The mean number of CCs to which members of this cohort were elected between 1920 and 1927 was 4.8. Turning to the Continuity Group, **Table 5** indicates that 9 out of 12 were born between 1890 and 1900; the older Gallacher and Stewart and the youthful Rust being the outliers. All but the latter had reached or neared maturity by 1917. By 1930, at the peak of the Third Period, they were in their prime: their mean age was 36.9 years. Ten were foundation members; the remaining two enrolled in 1922 and 1923. The mean number of CCs on which they served before 1928 was 4.6; from 1929 onwards, 10.8. A majority – seven – were elected on 15 or more occasions over their party careers and thus constituted the core leadership of British Communism between the 1920s and the 1950s.

Newcomers were markedly younger. Of those for whom birth information is available, four were children of the 1880s, 16 of the 1890s and 18 (47.4%) were born in the first decade of the twentieth century: see **Table 6**. The mean age of the Newcomers in 1930 was 33.0 years. There was, however, gender differentiation. The seven women for whom data is available had a mean age of 36.1 years, in that year. In contrast, the male debutantes were more youthful, with a mean age of 32.3 years. The attempt to bring younger representatives on to the CC was therefore successful, particularly with regard to men. Information on date of joining the party – available for 83% of the Newcomers – indicates that, in contrast to the Old Guard and Continuity Group, only 13 (38.2%) were foundation members. The remainder enrolled through the decade: 1922, 3; 1923, 5; 1924, 4; 1925, 3; 1926, 3; 1927, 1, 1928, 1; 1929, 1. Therefore a substantial number, 13 (38.2%), had only recently joined between 1924 and 1929. The increased youthfulness the Newcomers brought to the CC was tempered by the brevity of their tenure. Twenty-five (61.0%) of the latter served only one term during the Third Period; a further five (12.2%) served twice. The experience of party leadership of

almost three-quarters of the Newcomers was therefore confined to the years between 1929 and 1935.

The different age profiles of the three groups were reflected in the ages at which their members were first elected to the CC. The mean age of the Old Guard on their initial elevation was 37.3 years, the Continuity Group, 30.3 years, the Newcomers, 32.6 years (calculated from data in the Appendices). These figures are distorted by the presence of the older female contingent whose mean age on election was 36.1 years. However, despite the Third Period emphasis on youth, even the male Newcomers were slightly older than members of the Continuity Group at first election: the mean was 32.0 years. The sub-set of ten Newcomers – nine men and one woman – who survived on the CC after 1935 were marginally younger than the Newcomers as whole: their mean age in 1930 was 30.5 years, and 30.9 years at first election, indicating that the party leadership experienced a limited infusion of youthfulness in the longer term.

Differences in age and the year in which representatives became Communists produced a degree of generational cohesion but also differentiation in responding to significant events which cannot be fully explored here. But if we take the First World War as an example, over a fifth of the 47 Communists who made up the founding cohort of leaders in 1920–1923 were conscientious objectors (COs), many suffering imprisonment under brutal conditions (McIlroy & Campbell, 2020a, p. 450). Similar tendencies were apparent in the Old Guard and Continuity Group: one member of the former, Brown, and one third of the latter – Arnot, Dutt, Horner and Stewart – had been COs. However, two of the Old Guard, Rothstein and Loeber, and a quarter of the Continuity Group – Campbell, Kerrigan and Robson – served in the armed forces. In contrast, none of the much larger group of Newcomers were COs while 12 (36.4%) of the men had seen military service.

## **Origins and occupations**

What do we know about the background of the members of our three groups? The Old Guard was 61.5% English, 30.8% Scottish and 7.7% Welsh, and thus mirrored the composition of the pre-1929 leadership considered above. The Continuity Group reflected the historic prominence of Scots in the party leadership: 50% were born in Scotland, 41.7% were English and one (8.3%) was Welsh. All the Newcomers were born in Britain, except Wesker whose birthplace was Russia. They were considerably more Anglified than the Old Guard and Continuity Group. Of the British-born representatives, 25 (65.8%) were English, 7 (18.4%) Scots and 6 (15.8%) Welsh. However, the Scottish presence in the leadership after 1935 was further boosted by the five Scots (50.0%) in the Survivors sub-category, alongside four English people (40.0%) and one Welshman (10.0%).

The Old Guard and Continuity Group each had two middle-class members, 15.4% and 16.7% respectively. The occupations of the fathers of Old Guard representatives included five skilled manual workers, six unskilled, a businessman and a translator; those of the Continuity Group four skilled workers, four unskilled, two miners and a doctor and a journalist. In contrast, the Newcomers more closely reflected the wider party – 92.3% came from proletarian families. Only three – Duncan, Pollitt and Robinson – were brought up in middle-class homes. The paternal occupations of the Newcomers included seven coal miners (18.4%), eight skilled metal workers (21.1%), 10 other skilled trades (26.3%), seven unskilled labourers (18.4%), three clerical workers (7.9%) plus a businessman, a cathedral organist and a head teacher. Over three-quarters were thus skilled manual workers, miners or white-collar workers. The wives or husbands of Newcomers who were married were almost entirely drawn from the working-class (including those of the middle-class-born Duncan, Pollitt and Robinson), although second partnerships, as in the cases of Bramley and Shields, might cross the class divide.

The occupational backgrounds of the Old Guard and Continuity Group were predominantly skilled manual, white-collar or petit bourgeois. The Old Guard comprised five skilled manual workers (four in metalworking trades), four unskilled, one miner, one clerk, one journalist and a woman of independent means. Five members of the Continuity Group had been skilled workers (including four metalworkers), one unskilled, two miners, two white-collar workers, and two university graduates. However, it is important to note that by 1929, both groups consisted almost wholly of party functionaries or, in the case of Rothstein and Glading, employees of Soviet enterprises. The only exceptions were Loeber, a carriage cleaner, and Allan, a union official.

To what extent did the Newcomers personify the prototype of leaders from industry? If we examine their initial occupations, the majority – over three-quarters – had experienced manual labour. Nine (23.0%) had worked as miners, seven (17.9%) as skilled metalworkers, three (7.7%) in other skilled trades, six (15.4%) had been employed in textile mills or clothing workshops and five (12.8%) in various unskilled occupations. The prominence of miners and engineers only partly reflects the composition of the party at large during these years, which was dominated by miners (Thorpe, 2000b, p. 787; McIlroy & Campbell, 2021a, p. 215). In addition, there were three clerks, three teachers and a housewife while two – Shields and Springhall – had been party workers from their early twenties. However, this occupational summary begs further questions. First, given that between 40% and 60% of CPGB members were unemployed in 1930 and 1931 (Thorpe, 2000b, p. 789) – and it is plausible to hazard that victimisation ensured the rate among leading activists would be higher – what was the employment status of the Newcomers *when they were first elected to the committee*? Second, whatever their original trade, how many had by then switched occupations or joined the party payroll, whether on a permanent or ad hoc basis?

The two questions are inter-related. ‘Party worker’ could embrace employees of the CPGB paid a weekly wage or those working for satellite organisations like the MM or the NUWCM, or in the districts where remuneration may sometimes have been more intermittent, particularly in the context of a small, unstable, declining and impoverished party membership. It also embraced a pool of usually unemployed auxiliaries which could, for example, be deployed in major disputes or the ‘concentration areas’ prioritised by the Comintern and CPGB. This latter group might only receive expenses or temporary payment to supplement unemployment benefits. Moreover, party workers could move between the two categories. Short, for example, recalled: ‘I was paid by the Party until 1933. Then our wages were stopped and for a long period we “lived on the land” eventually managed to get unemployed assistance and continued as a full-time worker for the party.’<sup>12</sup>

Focussing on their role when elected, the first category included Allison (MM Secretary), Bright (Manchester District Organiser [DO]), Cox (South Wales DO), Hoyle (Liverpool DO), Jones (South Wales NUWCM organiser), Lynch (YCL official), McGree (Liverpool DO), McIlhone (Sheffield DO), McLennan (Scottish MM organiser), Moffat (UMS organiser), Roberts (Birmingham DO), Robinson (Sheffield DO), Shields (International Class War Prisoners’ Association), Short (NUWCM organiser), Smith (National Woman’s Organiser), Springhall (London secretariat), Tapsell (YCL Secretary), Wilde (Sheffield DO), Bert Williams (Agit-Prop Department), Garfield Williams (Secretary, South Wales MM) and Woolley (Organiser, Workers’ Legion, a post to which he was appointed a week before the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress). Lily Webb worked alongside her husband who was a DO.

Others can best be described as party auxiliaries in receipt of periodic payment on their first election to the CC. Ancrum, recorded: ‘Most of my party work as [sic] been carried out in the British Coalfield either as MM or WIR [Workers’ International Relief] organiser,

having been paid functionary at intervals.’<sup>13</sup> Garnett was placed at the ‘unpaid disposal’ of the Lancashire District on his return from the International Lenin School (ILS) in 1931. Scott received £3 per week as part-time secretary of the MM Metalworkers section.<sup>14</sup> Several were primarily activists in the unemployed movement for which they would receive expenses. The employment status of others is unclear. Wesker, a clothing worker, had recently returned from service at the Comintern and was soon to become a UCW organiser, while Hermon, a London electrician, had been co-opted to the PB prior to election to the CC: arguably both should be considered party functionaries. This suggests that, whatever its sometimes precarious nature, at least 28, or 72%, of the Newcomers were party workers, broadly defined, at the time of their election. While they were involved in union struggles, suffering arrest and imprisonment, it was as outside agitators not workplace militants. Moreover, given the Old Guard and Continuity Groups were dominated by party functionaries, over 80% of CC representatives were on the payroll in some capacity and, despite job insecurity, did not experience the high level of unemployment endured by the membership as a whole.

Only a small minority of Newcomers, some 13%, were employed in proletarian occupations: Collins in a tinplate factory; Cosslett, as a railwayman; McLean, in railway workshops; Usher, an upholsterer in the furniture industry; and Walsh in a woollen mill. Rushton, a weaver, had been forced to ‘leave the factory for good’ in the year he was elected to the CC due to injury (Dickinson, 1982). The remainder were not employed in industry when elected: Bramley, a former engineer worked as a chauffeur; Cree was a housewife; Moody, a council dustman; Pollitt, a secretary; and Duncan a schoolteacher.

Rothstein from the Old Guard and Arnot and Dutt from the Continuity Group, representing 7.6% and 16.6% of their respective memberships, were university graduates – this broadly compares with the period 1920–1928 when 11% of CC members had undergone higher education (McIlroy & Campbell, 2021b, pp. 394–395). The working-class origins of



the large majority of Newcomers meant most had little formal education. The exceptions were Duncan, a university graduate, and Pollitt who attended teacher training college – only 4.9% of the total. In addition, Cox, Jones and Bert Williams had studied at the trade-union sponsored Central Labour College (CLC). Of greater relevance to the Newcomers was attendance at the ILS (McIlroy & Campbell, 2003, pp. 121–124). A total of 15 (36.6%) studied there: eight (19.5%) were ILS alumni prior to their first election to the CC, while a further seven (17.1%) were educated there after service on the committee. It is noteworthy that three of the ten Third Period Survivors – McIlhone, McLennan and Springhall – graduated before their debut on the committee. Whereas 36.6% of the Newcomers attended the school, only Kerrigan of the Continuity Group and Glading from the Old Guard did so after featuring on the CC. ILS attendance was only one element in the sustained connections between CC representatives and Moscow which extended across the groups: for example, three members of the Old Guard, six of the Continuity Group and six Newcomers served as representatives to the Comintern or RILU; five Old Guard, nine Continuity Group and seven Newcomers were Comintern or RILU Congress delegates; two of the Old Guard, one of the Continuity Group and four Newcomers worked at the Comintern or its youth organisation; in addition, numerous representatives visited the Soviet Union on delegations or CPGB business.

Newcomers displayed a lack of a pre-CPGB political hinterland compared with their predecessors as well as members of the other two CC groupings. Of representatives elected 1923–1927, 40% had been ILP, 35% BSP, 27% SLP (McIlroy & Campbell, 2021a, p. 213). Almost all the Old Guard and Continuity groups had been politically engaged before joining the CPGB. Among the former, Brown, Crawford, Joss, Turner and Wilson had been in the ILP; Inkpin, Glading and Rothstein, the BSP; Bell, Jackson and Murphy, the SLP; while Watkins was active in the miners' reform movements. Among the latter, Campbell,

Gallacher, Hannington, Pollitt, were BSP members – Pollitt also owed allegiance to the Workers’ Socialist Federation (WSF); Allan was in the SLP; Robson, the ILP; Arnot and Dutt were Guilds League Communists; Rust adhered to the Labour Party, while Stewart was associated with the Communist Unity Group (CUG) and Horner the South Wales Socialist Society (See **Appendices 1 and 2**). On the possibly incomplete evidence in **Appendix 3**, a little over half – 23 – of the Newcomers had some record of membership of other political organisations, with 17 (41.5%) being involved in the Labour Party and/or ILP. Only a small minority had a prior engagement with Marxist politics: three in the BSP, two in the SLP while Springhall when a naval rating had worked with the BSP and WSF. The political formation of many Newcomers, and for most their introduction to revolutionary politics, took place within the Communist Party.

### **Evolution of the CC across the Third Period**

If we move beyond aggregate data to consider the three committees individually, we get a finer-grained picture of how the leadership evolved during the ‘Class Against Class’ years. The 30-strong CC elected in January 1929 contained four women and 26 men (see **Table 1**). While the mean age was 37.2 years, this was stratified by membership of the three groupings. The mean age of the 13-strong Old Guard was 41.8 years, that of the 11 Continuity Group members, 35.8 years, the six Newcomers, 29.7 years. Over half the representatives were English, one third Scots and 10% Welsh. Five members (16.7%) came from a middle-class background, three of whom had attended university and one teacher training college. What is striking is how few were employed outside the orbit of the party, its satellites or Soviet institutions at the start of 1929. Allan was general secretary of the Lanarkshire Mineworkers’ Union; Kerrigan, an engineer on his way to the ILS; Loeber, a carriage cleaner; Moody, a dustman; and Pollitt, a secretary. The varied roles of the remainder included those working at

party headquarters, for example Inkpin, Campbell, Gallacher, Murphy, Turner, Stewart and Wilson; as propagandists, Jackson, Joss and Crawford; DOs like Bright, Brown, Cox, Robson and Lily Webb; those employed by the MM (Pollitt, Horner and Watkins), NUWCM (Hannington), YCL (Tapsell) or at the Comintern (Arnot and Bell). Rothstein was a correspondent for the Soviet news agency, TASS, while Glading, dismissed from Woolwich Arsenal the previous year, worked at the Soviet-owned Russian Oil Products (ROP) but would soon enrol at the ILS. Residing in Brussels after a breakdown in 1924, Dutt remained in close contact with the Comintern and CPGB, received financial subvention and constituted an essential component of its leadership. Over four-fifths of the January 1929 CC were therefore employed or funded by the CPGB, its subsidiaries, or Soviet institutions.

By the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress in late 1929, the momentum of the Third Period had accelerated and the committee was culled: 16 of the 30 representatives elected in January were not re-elected in December. The Old Guard was reduced to a rump of Joss and Murphy in their final tenure in the leadership; there were nine members of the Continuity Group following the removal of the 52-year-old Stewart and Kerrigan and the return of Rust. Three of the Newcomers from January (Cox, Moody and Tapsell) were joined by a further 22 novices, including four women (see **Table 2**). The restructuring increased the youthful profile of the party leaders. The mean age of the CC in December was 34.3 years (compared with 37.2 in January), that of the new members for whom information is available was 34 years. The committee had a more English complexion: over two-thirds were English-born, a little over a quarter were Scots and two were Welsh. In accordance with Comintern requirements, the new CC was more proletarian than its predecessor: only three representatives (8.8%) came from a middle-class background, each of whom had attended university.

However, the attempt to root the leadership in the factories met with limited success. Hermon was a candidate member of the Political Bureau (PB) from August 1929 following

Soviet insistence that ‘three London members actually in the workshops’ be co-opted, although his exact employment status remains unknown.<sup>15</sup> Of the others, only three can be identified as working in factories or workshops (Collins, Usher and Walsh), while Cosslett was a railwayman, Moody a dustman, Bramley a chauffeur and Duncan a teacher. Rushton and Short were unemployed. The remainder of the CC were engaged in work in the national or local party organisation or in its subsidiaries, such as Allan, by then general secretary of the UMS and Moffat, a UMS organiser (Campbell, 2000, pp. 333). That the proportion of party workers on the enlarged committee had declined from four-fifths in January to a little over two-thirds in December represented decreased reliance on the apparatus; it could not conceal the continuing failure to build a leadership rooted in the workplace.

The November 1932 CC reverted to a membership of 30, including only two women, and displayed further turnover (See **Tables 3** and **6**). There were nine representatives from the Continuity Group, but the Old Guard had disappeared. Of the Newcomers, 13 (43.3%) were first timers, a further seven had been elected in December 1929 and Cox was on his third spell in the leadership; Newcomers thus comprised 70% of the committee’s membership. Its mean age in 1932 was 34.2 years, slightly older than that of its predecessor; that of the novitiates 32.5 years. Half of the representatives were English-born, one third Scots, while four (13.3%) were Welsh and one had been born in the Russian empire. The committee was similarly proletarian: once again, only three were from middle-class families, two of whom were university graduates.

But there were two striking changes. The first related, again and crucially, to the almost complete absence of representation from factories or workshops. Only McLean, from the Glasgow railway workshops and the tinplate labourer Collins merited the description. The large majority – 90% – were employed in some form of party work. The second significant development was that for the first time ILS *graduates* featured on the committee. Whereas

four members of the January CC proceeded to attend the school after election, as did six who served on the December 1929 committee, no less than 10 – one third – of the 1932 representatives had been trained at the Comintern academy *prior* to election.

What conclusions can we draw from this quantitative analysis? The first is that in comparison with earlier years, the composition of the CC changed dramatically during the Third Period. The Old Guard who joined the party on its formation or during ‘the long foundation period’ up to 1923, were removed, the majority by the end of 1929, the remainder by 1932. The Continuity group contained the core leaders who would remain at the top through succeeding decades. They were augmented by 41 Newcomers, three-quarters of whom failed to survive in the leadership beyond 1935. Second, innovation reduced the mean age of committee members as a whole from over 37 years in January 1929 to just over 34 years in 1932, although the novices were not uniformly youthful, especially the female cohort. In terms of Comintern aspirations, this was hardly transformative. Third, the number of women more than doubled compared with 1920–1928. However, it is noteworthy that two experienced women, Crawford and Turner, were lost in the dismissal of the Old Guard, and that, except for Smith, none of the female Newcomers served more than one term, testimony to failure to build a female cadre (McIlroy & Campell, 2022a).

Fourth, the point applied more generally, as these CCs were marked by high turnover. This entailed instability: the ‘churn’ meant over 60% of Newcomers served on only one committee and three-quarters on one or two. Sometimes tenure was limited by absence at the ILS, but that applied to a small minority. Nor does diminished zeal for ‘Class Against Class’ explain failure to secure re-selection for the CC. Only the ten Survivors were re-elected from 1935: of these only Allison, Bramley and Cox were incorporated into the core leadership, sitting on a further five or six CCs, while Shields and Springhall served in the covert

apparatus; McLennan, Moffat and Scott owed their enduring presence to their union positions.

Fifth, the project of maximising the number of workplace militants in the leadership was an abject failure: only a small minority of the Newcomers fitted this description while a handful more were essentially unemployed movement activists. The majority, including the ten ‘Survivors’, were absorbed into the apparatus or party unions although in some cases this was temporary and wages intermittent. The CC was dominated by representatives working for the CPGB and its satellite organisations: their presence on the committee ranged from two-thirds to nine-tenths. This leads to our sixth conclusion. ‘Class Against Class’ was intended to buttress domination of the Comintern and the national sections by the Soviet elite. The brief duration of most of the Newcomers’ service meant for them the CC plausibly functioned more as an agency of socialisation and indoctrination than a forum in which they determined strategy. Perusal of committee minutes suggests interventions by Newcomers were restricted; more often they provided an audience for experienced leaders to expound application of ‘the new line’. That a third of the 1932 committee were graduates of the ILS, an institution with the purpose of cementing a Stalinist cadre, and that 37% of the Newcomers attended the school before or after their election, is important in understanding the CC in these years.

What became of these CC members? Of the Old Guard, Turner left in the early 1930s, Murphy in 1932, Wilson and Loeber by 1940. The remainder, 70% of the total, maintained a lifelong adherence to Communism. Fidelity marked the Continuity Group: only Allan resigned in 1956, although Horner’s affiliation became increasingly formal. Incomplete evidence on the Newcomers also suggests loyalty was long-lasting. At least 31 – over three-quarters – remained lifelong Communists, including all the Survivors, with the exception of McLennan who was expelled in 1961, aged 55, after rigging union votes (McIlroy &

Campbell, 2002b, p. 63). As **Appendix 3** indicates, many continued as full-timers, often as DOs; four (Hermon, McIlhone, Shields and Springhall) served as representatives to the Comintern; three as Political Commissars in Spain – Springhall, Tapsell and Bert Williams, while Woolley also served there. A few such as Moody and Woolley abandoned Stalinism. Others like Garfield Williams and Lynch disappeared from the record.

## **People of a special mould? The leading Communists in Third Period Britain**

‘We Communists are people of a special mould’, Stalin declaimed in 1924, ‘we are made of a special stuff’.<sup>16</sup> How did his assertion apply to leading CPGB activists during the ‘Class Against Class’ years? This section provides basic information on the careers of those who participated in the leadership of British Communism between 1928 and 1934. We have broken them down into six categories.

### **The Old Guard casualties of December 1929**

**Table 4** and **Appendix 1** list leaders who sat on the CC before the Third Period, survived its first phase but were removed in late 1929, never again to serve on the committee.<sup>17</sup>

Prominent among them was Albert Inkpin (1884–1944), a working-class London clerk, former secretary of the BSP and CPGB founding member. He had stood at the centre of power since 1920, serving as secretary before falling foul of the Comintern which disciplined him when the press publicised Soviet subsidies he supervised. Identified with the CPGB’s antecedent ‘sects’ and softness towards Labour, he was branded a bureaucrat rather than a revolutionary politician and provided a convenient scapegoat for the failings of the old leadership. Exiled to Berlin and Amsterdam as secretary of the Friends of the Soviet Union, it was 1938 before he was permitted to return to London. Another veteran, Thomas Bell (1882–1944), a former activist in the SDF and SLP, played a key role in the CPGB’s foundation, in

its inner leadership, 1920–1924, and was a staple of the CC thereafter. He displayed insufficient dexterity in embracing ‘Class Against Class’ but continued to serve in paid positions until his death. His fellow former SLPer, Thomas Alfred Jackson (1879–1955) was, like Bell and Inkpin, middle-aged and identified with a failed past. A pedagogic maverick addicted to independent theorising, he served through the 1920s as a full-time propagandist and journalist before antagonising the Comintern. He subsequently devoted himself to teaching and writing.

In his mid-forties in 1930, J.R. ‘Jock’ Wilson (1884–1976) came from the ILP and after a career in the labour movement in Australia and Britain, figured regularly in the CPGB leadership before exhibiting insufficient zeal in repenting ‘right wing’ errors. Dismissed from the payroll in 1929 and found work at ROP, he returned to Australia and dropped out of Communist activity. Both middle-aged and middle-class, Helen Crawford (1877–1954) was also far from the Comintern identikit of young fighters from the factories. On the CC from 1923, she took no part in the leadership after 1929. Her ex-ILP comrade, Ernest Brown (1892–1960), a Yorkshire boot repairer, was a more junior participant, although he served as CPGB representative to the Comintern. Stereotyped as a ‘right winger’, he was excluded from the leadership but remained on the extended payroll until his death. Another former ILPer, Beth Turner (1894–1988), a Yorkshire mill worker, had served as CC member and National Woman’s Organiser since 1924. Under fire earlier for lack of theoretical acumen, her exit appears to have been sparked when she became pregnant after an extra-marital affair. She left the party in the early 1930s.

The fall of Andrew Rothstein (1898–1994), unique in this group as an intellectual and Oxford graduate – and well connected through his father, CPGB animator and later Soviet commissar, Theodore Rothstein – suggested nobody was indispensable. Persisting in criticising abandonment of Lenin’s position on Labour, he was exiled to Moscow and after



his return in 1931 never again occupied a leading position. The cohort's oldest member, Nat Watkins (1874–1952), active in the mining unions since the 1890s, a leading light in the MM and a fixture of the pre-Third Period leadership, was informed he must make way for younger men. He remained a Communist until his death. Another industrial cadre, William Loeber (1891–1965), an independent-minded activist in the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR), continued to serve the Communist cause until he quit in 1940. A younger trade unionist, Percy Glading (1893–1970), an engineering shop steward and BSP activist, appeared only briefly on the CC before 1929 and his tenure in the leadership was cut short after January 1929 by study at the ILS followed by adventures as a spy. After imprisonment for espionage, he was found work by the party until his death.

Two activists included in this category are distinctive: they were members of two of the three 'Class Against Class' committees and may thus be designated part of the Third Period leadership. William Joss (1884–1967), an experienced organiser and educator, was an engineer who taught at the Scottish Labour College at the time he joined the CPGB. After assisting the Communist MP, John Walton Newbold, as secretary, he worked as a DO and in the Agit-Prop Department until 1929. Another gifted Communist, J.T. Murphy (1886–1965) was an integral, if individualistic, leadership player after joining from the SLP in 1920. A Sheffield engineer prominent in the shop stewards' movement, he was a working-class intellectual who held a number of positions in the CPGB through the 1920s. He championed 'Class Against Class' but broke with the CPGB over his advocacy of the British government granting credits to finance Soviet-British trade. Briefly prominent in the Socialist League, he remained an admirer of Stalin and the Soviet Union until 1956.

## The Continuity Group

A dozen leaders elected before 1929 sat on the three committees of the 'Class Against Class' years and continued as representatives after 1935 – in some cases serving into the 1950s (see **Table 5** and **Appendix 2**). William Allan (1900–1970) met the criterion of the young militant seasoned in struggle, indeed he was a veteran of Scottish mining conflicts and had been in the SLP. He served on the CC between 1929 and 1932, became the first general secretary of the UMS, headed the MM and remained on the committee until 1937. Robin Page Arnot (1890–1986) played a leading part in 'Class Against Class' as CPGB representative to the Comintern and enthusiast for 'the new line'. An intellectual and union expert, his deficiencies were exposed as DO in Lancashire. Illness further compromised his rise through the hierarchy, and he was not re-elected to the CC in 1938. William Rust (1903–1949) similarly sat on all three committees, 1929–1932, and vied with Arnot in projecting a self-image of Stalinist steel. Part of the inner leadership from 1930, he edited the *Daily Worker* and served in Lancashire and Spain. After returning to the paper in 1939, he remained there until his early death.

Robert Stewart (1877–1971) and Robert William Robson (1897–1973) had slightly different experiences. A founder member at the centre of affairs before 1929, Stewart was dropped from the CC that December. He came back in 1935, stepping down thereafter while remaining engaged in secret work as part of the leadership into the post-war years. In contrast, Robson, who joined the CPGB from the ILP in 1922, was a strong advocate of the Third Period, remaining on the CC throughout before similarly retiring in 1935 to undertake covert work recruiting for Spain, sitting on the Cadres Commission and liaising with Communists in the armed forces. Wal Hannington (1896–1966) served on two out of three Third Period CCs but remained under pressure throughout, criticised for attempting to turn the NUWCM into a surrogate trade union rather than the Comintern-envisaged revolutionary

movement of the oppressed, and harbouring reservations about ‘the new line’. Ousted in 1932, he returned in 1935, was not elected in 1937 and was restored in 1943, finally departing in 1947. The miners’ leader Arthur Horner (1894–1968), like Hannington, operated under the constraints of the business end of party activity where he encountered the limits of radicalisation. Removed in 1929 and censured by the Comintern, he returned to the CC in 1935 and endured into the 1950s, an increasingly ornamental figure as President of the South Wales Miners and General Secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).

The remaining five members of this cohort constituted the core of ‘the core leadership’, figuring on the CC from the early 1920s into the 1950s. Significant differences existed between them during the Third Period. Dutt and Pollitt were prime movers of ‘Class Against Class’, Campbell the most eloquent sceptic, Gallacher initially a dissident. After rehabilitation in Moscow, Campbell worked his passage back to favour and Gallacher became another voluble advocate of ultra-left politics. His fellow Glaswegian, Peter Kerrigan (1899–1977), on the CC from 1927, in the second division during these years, recorded no doubts. Orthodoxy cemented by a stint at the ILS, he remained on the committee until 1965.

### **The Newcomers who survived as leaders**

The group which entered the leadership during the Third Period but survived at the top beyond it (see **Table 7**) were without exception from working-class homes. Four of the eleven had fathers in skilled occupations but only Bramley, McGree, McLennan and Scott had themselves worked in such jobs. Their formative influences were the poverty, social insecurity, unemployment and militancy of the early twentieth century. They were relatively young: a majority were born in the new century, three in the mid or late 1890s. Most joined the CPGB in the early 1920s while all worked at some point as party functionaries, although for a minority this preceded long-term employment in the unions. Raised in a religious

mining family in Lumphinnans, Fife, Abraham Moffat (1896–1975) volunteered as a soldier, serving 1917–1918 before becoming a pit checkweighman, minor union official and Communist Parish Councillor. Prominent in the UMS, he was its third general secretary. With its liquidation in 1935, he experienced further unemployment and it was 1940 before he was elected to the executive of the unified Scottish Miners' Union, becoming President of the Scottish Area of the new NUM and a leading light on its national executive. He combined an authoritarian and cautious attitude to union issues with admiration for Stalin and the Soviet Union (Campbell & McIlroy, 2005). Similar tendencies marked the tenure of Robert 'Bob' McLennan (1906–1981) at the top of the Electrical Trades Union (ETU). Ten years younger than Moffat, he joined the party at 19 in 1925. Facing insecurity as an electrician in the shipyards, he went on the party's books as a DO and functionary in the MM and NUWCM. Having attended the ILS, 1930–1931, he worked for the unemployed movement before taking a key role as National Fraction Leader in the CPGB takeover of the ETU and as the union's Assistant General Secretary in maintaining it. His career terminated in ballot rigging, disgrace and expulsion from the party.<sup>18</sup>

Like Moffat and McLennan, Joseph 'Joe' Scott (1900–1981) evolved into a left-wing trade unionist who maintained his youthful support for the Soviet Union. His early career culminated in election as candidate member of the PB, an event which signified his party's workerism and political weakness. After joining the CPGB in 1924, his activity centred on the MM facilitated his election as an Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) divisional organiser in 1935. Winning a seat on the executive in 1942, he remained a full-time officer until retirement.<sup>19</sup> Leo McGree (1900–1967) illustrates the difficulties with classification. After figuring on the CC between December 1929 and 1935 he was absent for 14 years, reappearing on the committee in 1949 and 1952. He has not therefore been included in **Table 7**, but merits comment as a long-term survivor. Raised in an Irish-Scottish family on

Merseyside, he qualified as a joiner before enrolling in the CPGB in Sheffield in 1924. Returning to Liverpool to become a party organiser, he was blacklisted and barred from office in the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers (ASW). With the ban reversed, he was elected ASW organiser in 1938 and District Secretary in 1945, a post he retained until retirement. He remained a loyal Communist, advocating Soviet policy through the Cold War and speaking out in support of the invasion of Hungary in 1956.<sup>20</sup>

There seems little doubt that George Allison (1895–1953), one of the older members of this contingent, could have followed a similar career as a union official. Instead, he spent almost his entire political life as a party functionary. Like Moffat a Fife miner, he entered the CPGB with the SLP and after filling minor party posts became a leader of the MM and CPGB representative at the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) in Moscow. In 1926–1927 he travelled on a mission to India where he was imprisoned and deported, subsequently serving a long-term stretch arising from involvement in the 1931 Invergordon Mutiny. Released in 1934, he worked as a DO and for the *Daily Worker*, becoming the party's industrial organiser before retiring in 1951.<sup>21</sup> The Communism of Jimmy Shields (1900–1949) was forged in the dislocation which followed World War I. From the Clydeside town of Greenock, he served in the army, 1918–1919, and worked intermittently in the shipyards and engineering workshops. Joining the CPGB in 1921, he was active in the YCL before migrating for health reasons to South Africa; between 1925 and 1928 he worked for its Communist Party, edited its paper and became its chair. He was a hard, dedicated proletarian of the type the Comintern favoured; yet in contrast to many of his peers, an early thirst for knowledge motivated attendance at party classes and wide reading in the Marxist classics. On his return to Britain, he worked for the International Labour Defence, the UMS, the Organisation and Industrial Departments before serving as representative to the Comintern, 1932–1934, and subsequently as PB member and editor of the *Daily Worker*. Clandestine

work on the Cadres Commission and in the International Department curtailed his presence on the CC after 1937. He remained a key leader, with MI5 commending him as ‘one of the most hard-working officials at Party headquarters’.<sup>22</sup>

Like his *confrères*, Bob McIlhone (1902–1966) was an advocate of ‘Class Against Class’. Another product of industrial Scotland, from Bellshill in Lanarkshire, he followed his father into the steel industry. Joining the CPGB in 1923 after a spell in the ILP, he was elected to the YCL executive before studying at the ILS, 1927–1930, acquiring ability in Russian. Although the School’s report was critical, he was appointed as the CPGB’s Sheffield organiser and from mid-1934 represented the party at the Comintern. Dropped from the CC in 1937, he continued in the second echelon, as Scottish organiser, 1941–1948, and Glasgow secretary, 1948–1955. He was seen as difficult, sceptical, even cynical; some felt exposure to life in the Soviet Union eroded his faith. Ill-health saw him transfer to Moscow as a translator in the Foreign Languages Publishing House in 1955. He worked in the party’s Glasgow bookshop until his death in 1966.<sup>23</sup>

The youthful activity of the only Welshman in this cohort, the Maesteg miner, Idris Cox (1899–1989) was in the South Wales Miners’ Federation (SWMF), the Labour Party and the Labour Colleges movement. On a union scholarship to the CLC, he became a Communist. Barred from returning to the pits, he worked as a National Council of Labour Colleges (NCLC) tutor before passing on to the party payroll, serving as a district and national organiser, editor of the *Daily Worker* and in the Parliamentary and International Departments. As dedicated an exponent of Popular Front politics as he had been of ‘the new line’, he remained on the CC until 1952.<sup>24</sup> Another apparatus man, Ted Bramley (1905–1959) was, like his comrade Bill Rust, drilled in conventional values as a Boy Scout. Raised by socialist parents, he became an engineering worker who joined the CPGB from the Westminster Labour Party in 1927, operating undercover until expelled. He was a chauffeur

when elected to the CC in 1932 – reasonably youthful but scarcely a workplace militant – and it was 1934 before he was instructed to work full-time for the party. A long-term District Secretary in London, from which he was reluctant to move even when prompted by King Street, he remained on the CC until 1948 when he became a farmer.<sup>25</sup>

Four years older, another Londoner, Douglas ‘Dave’ Springhall (1901–1953) led a more eventful life. In touch with the WSF and BSP as a young naval rating in the heady days after the war, he was dismissed the service for subversive activity in 1920 and joined the CPGB. Prominent in the YCL and NUWCM, he was appointed London District Secretary after studying at the ILS, 1929–1931. Later an International Brigade (IB) Commissar in Spain, *Daily Worker* editor and British representative to the Comintern, he carried the news of Stalin’s reversal of the ‘anti-fascist war’ line to King Street in 1939. Part of the restructured leadership as National Organiser, Springhall was convicted of spying for the Soviet Union in 1943. Expelled from the CPGB, he remained a committed Communist ‘looked after’ by the party on his release and died in a Moscow hospital in 1953 after working in Beijing.<sup>26</sup> The oldest and only woman in this group, Rosina ‘Rose’ Smith (1891–1985) passed away in China thirty-two years later. Like the other women, her time on the CC was limited but she spent around a quarter of a century from 1929 as a party functionary. A former member of the BSP, she joined the CPGB in 1922 while a housewife with young children and after her marriage broke up became a party worker in Lancashire. As National Women’s Organiser, she was co-opted to the CC in 1930 and briefly to the PB. When the national women’s post was mothballed, she worked as a *Daily Worker* correspondent for twenty years from 1934. In later life, she embraced Mao’s brand of Stalinism and was employed by the Chinese Communist Party (McIlroy & Campbell, 2022b).

### **The Newcomers who did not survive: different but equal?**

Women were a small minority of the CPGB, before 1929 only fleetingly exceeding 20% of the membership, under-represented in the leadership and stereotyped as secretaries, stenographers and tea-makers. More were elected to the CC during the Third Period but only Smith served beyond it or lasted more than a single term. They were committed and militant; arguably only Usher qualified as a workplace activist when elected (McIlroy & Campbell, 2022a).<sup>27</sup> Lily Webb (1897–1959) elected in January 1929 but replaced 11 months later, shared a number of DO appointments with her husband, Morris Ferguson, between 1925 and 1935. Raised in the textile town of Ashton Under Lyne, Lancashire, she followed her family into the mills. Her sense of injustice and desire to fight exploitation brought her to the CPGB in 1921 and she became an NUWCM organiser. Vocal in denouncing the old leadership and ‘the right danger’, she visited Russia on several occasions and was a leader of the 1932 Women’s Hunger March. After 1935, she returned to the mills. She later dropped out of activity, took up farming and resigned from the party in 1949, returning three years later.<sup>28</sup>

In contrast, another one-term representative, Marjorie Pollitt (1902–1991), the illegitimate daughter of a cathedral organist, enjoyed an unusual middle-class upbringing and qualified as a schoolteacher. Her affiliation to the CPGB owed more to a critical view of society than deprivation. After her marriage to Harry Pollitt in 1925, she suffered victimisation but was employed by the party, writing for the Soviet press, working in the Agit-Prop Department and as a guide for Progressive Tours. The advent of children did not inhibit involvement and the post-war years saw her active on the CPGB’s London District Committee and in the Co-operative movement. After her husband’s death, she retired to Australia. Annie Cree (1891–1957) likewise served a single term and was married to a party member, although she was more prominent in the CPGB than her husband. Again, the presence of young children does not appear to have impeded activity. The daughter of a



Chesterfield clerical worker and a former member of the BSP, she was active in Sheffield in the 1920s as a Communist in the Labour Party and on the Board of Guardian, and in the South of England in the 1930s in the Co-operative Women's Guilds.

Her fellow CC member, Kath Duncan (1888–1954), a St Andrews graduate and former suffragette who joined the CPGB on arrival in London in 1926, was also better known as an activist than her Communist husband. From a middle-class, Scottish background and childless, her passionate engagement in a range of local activity which centred on the unemployed movement and incurred several spells in prison make her absence from the CC after one term particularly difficult to understand. The only woman working in industry at the time of her election to the CC, Ellen 'Nellie' Usher (1882–1969) was a London war widow. Taking a job as a bus conductor, she became a dedicated trade unionist, respected in the Upholsterers' Union in the post-war period and active in the London Labour Party which she left for the CPGB in 1928. Approaching 50 when elected to the CC, she hardly filled the Comintern bill of the young militant, and after 1932 played no part in the leadership, although active in the party into the 1950s. Sarah Wesker (1903–1971) had been a shop floor leader in clothing. A dedicated militant and exuberant partisan of 'Class Against Class', she took her seat on the committee in 1932 as a party functionary. The daughter of Jewish refugees from Tsarist Russia, she was brought to Britain at the age of nine and grew up in London's East End where she worked in clothing factories and was radicalised in the sweatshops. In 1929 she joined the CPGB and UCW, which later employed her as an organiser, and began a long relationship with Mick Mindel, a coming force in the Ladies Tailors' Union whom she recruited to the CPGB. In 1931–1932, she worked in the Comintern Women's Department in Moscow and when the CPGB dissolved the UCW eventually returned to the Tailor and Garment Workers' Union as a full-time official. She supported the party leaders in 1956 and venerated Stalin until her death.

### **No longer in the leadership – still active in the party**

A number of Third Period leaders who vacated the CC continued to work as Communists in various capacities, although in some cases their careers were curtailed by premature death. Alex Hermon (1900–1936), a London electrician, illustrated the limitations of the forces the CPGB could put into the union field. Committed to the party he had joined in 1920, victimisation and unemployment militated against accumulation of the experience and expertise necessary to outmanoeuvre the anti-Communist leadership of the ETU. Promoted above his pay grade as a candidate member of the PB and CPGB representative at the Comintern in 1929–1930, he performed unimpressively. The party could only muster two delegates to the 1930 TUC and despite coaching, Hermon proved a disappointing public speaker whose pursuit of ‘the new line’ saw him expelled from the ETU in 1931. Reinstated the following year, he acquitted himself sufficiently well at the ILS to be entrusted with Comintern missions to Shanghai and Berlin, 1934–1935, before death nipped his progress in the bud.<sup>29</sup> Dover-born but London-made, another young firebrand, Walter Tapsell (1904–1938) proved more adept. Enrolling as a Communist in 1921 and drawn into the YCL as a full-time worker, he moved around Britain and visited Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Germany and the Soviet Union, emerging as the League’s secretary in 1929, the year he went on the CC and subsequently the PB. ‘Tappy’ attended the ILS in 1930–1931 and then worked full-time for the party and acted as business manager of the *Daily Worker*. A Third Period true believer, he was influenced by Dutt and Rust and, like almost all ‘Class Against Class’ warriors, existential allegiance to the Comintern and Soviet Union ensured he had no difficulty in championing the antipodean politics of the Popular Front. An able IB Commissar, he died fighting fascism in Spain.<sup>30</sup> The Civil War played some part in the early death of Lewis Jones (1897–1939). Refused permission to volunteer – he was considered

more useful in Wales – hyper-activity in the Aid for Spain movement contributed to his final illness. A Rhondda miner, lodge chair and checkweighman, he was an SWMF student at the CLC, 1923–1925. In the face of victimisation, he threw himself into the unemployed movement, enhancing a reputation as a spell-binding orator, before becoming the CPGB's Rhondda District Secretary and a Glamorgan County Councillor, 1936–1939. His dismissal from the payroll on grounds of political errors, failure to build the membership and, possibly, philandering, failed to dent his loyalty but may have hastened his demise (Smith, 1978, 1982).

Frank Bright (1891–1944) also failed to survive into the post-war years. A Devonian who moved to South Wales to work in the mines, he was an SWMF militant from 1908. Active in the South Wales Socialist Society, he joined the CPGB with the Communist Party-British Section of the Third International. Prominent in the struggles of the 1920s, like Jones he was no longer a miner when appointed the CPGB's Manchester organiser after the General Strike and was not particularly youthful – he was 38 when elected to the CC in 1929. After standing at Wigan in that year's general election, he attended the ILS, briefly joined the school staff, worked for the Comintern in Berlin and acted as DO in Liverpool and Lancashire, 1935–1939. Convalescing after illness in Devon, he again took on organising duties before his death in 1944.<sup>31</sup> His fellow miner, James Ancrum (1898–1946) served in the navy, 1915–1919. Radicalised by the conflicts in the Durham coalfield, he joined the CPGB in 1926, became a party propagandist and secretary of the Durham MM in 1927, and figured in the bitter Dawdon strike the following year. Excluded from the industry after 1926, his pursuit of 'the new line' provoked expulsion from the Durham Miners' Association (DMA) in 1930, although he was reinstated after his return from Moscow where he studied at the ILS, 1931–1932. Thereafter, he worked for the NUWCM and WIR and was elected as a Communist to Felling Urban District Council, retaining his seat until his premature death.<sup>32</sup>

A fellow miner, the Abertillery-born Bertie ‘Bert’ Williams (1895–1958), volunteered for the army when World War I began and was belatedly called up in 1917. He joined the CPGB in 1922 after brief membership of the ILP and with his brother and fellow Communist, Bill, studied at the CLC, 1923–1925, on a SWMF scholarship. Blacklisted by the mine owners, he worked as a CPGB organiser, for the UMS, the Agit-Prop Department and, in 1931, for the Comintern. Subsequently, he took a course at the ILS where his scholasticism annoyed the CPGB representative in Moscow, Page Arnot, who remarked: ‘Comrade Williams has to realise that “study” is no God damn use to anyone, even himself, unless he at once applies it in the form of an article in our Party press’ (McIlroy, 2003, pp. 63–64). Nonetheless, he was pressed into service on the CC in 1932, although as a 37-year-old who had long left industry, he did not completely meet the job description. Appointed a political commissar in the International Brigades, he suffered heart problems and was recalled. After service as DO in the Midlands into the war years, he played no significant part in CPGB politics.<sup>33</sup>

The Lancashire cotton industry activist, James Rushton (1885–1955), likewise figured fleetingly on the CC, although he was approaching his mid-forties and unemployed when elected. An ex-member of the BSP and Labour Party, a soldier during World War I, he joined the CPGB in 1921 and was variously a weaver, general labourer and electrician. Expelled from the Weavers’ Union in 1928, he helped publish the *Barnoldswick Factory Worker*, and continued to agitate in the strikes of the early 1930s. Frequently unemployed and active in the NUWCM, he stood for the CPGB in the 1932 Skipton by-election. He remained a lifelong Communist (Dickinson, 1982). His friend, James Garnett (1894–1980), also served in the army, 1914–1918, having relocated from Devon to work in the cotton mills of Haslingden, Lancashire. He enrolled in the CPGB in 1923 but was unemployed for most of the decade.

After studying at the ILS, 1930–1931, he edited *The Cotton Worker*, and was secretary of the Cotton Workers' Solidarity Movement, launched in 1932. He was active into the 1950s.<sup>34</sup>

His fellow Lancastrian, Charles Hoyle (1901–1987), an engineering militant and AEU activist, joined the party with the ILP left in 1921 and occupied various positions before spending three and a half years from 1925 as Liverpool DO. Attending the ILS, 1930–1931, he returned to the shopfloor, participating in organising struggles, notably at Briggs Motors in the early 1930s and standing for the AEU presidency in 1934 and for general secretary in 1941. He remained active until retirement in 1971.<sup>35</sup> Like Hoyle, the Durham miner George Short (1900–1994) was a rank-and-file militant unable to operate as a workplace leader during his years on the CC because of his record. Living in the 'Little Moscow' of Chopwell from 1920, his experience of unemployment and victimisation impelled him towards the CPGB. Active in the General Strike and mining lockout, he became a Communist in 1926 and finding work as a builder's labourer immersed himself in party activity – although again unemployed when drafted on to the CC. After study at the ILS, 1930–1931, he was a DO in the North-East and Middlesbrough District Secretary into the 1940s. Active in unions from the DMA and the Engine Winders to the National Union of General and Municipal Workers (NUGMW), Short ended life as secretary of the Teesside Pensioners' Association.<sup>36</sup>

The Barrow-born Tom Roberts (1891–1954) was, like Short, a man of many occupations. Leaving school at 14, he worked as an iron ore miner, agricultural labourer, building worker and shunter on the railways in England, where he was member of the wartime Vigilance Committees, and the USA. From 1919–1922 he was an organiser for the Agricultural Workers' Union. Formed by deprivation and the militancy of the first decades of the twentieth century, he was active in the ILP, 1915–1924; on his expulsion, he adhered to the CPGB, having worked with the NUWCM, in whose interest he served a three-year term as a Stafford Town Councillor, 1923–1926. He moved to Birmingham and worked for ROP

before leaving for the ILS in 1930. Back in Britain he became Birmingham DO, took a leading part in strikes at Lucas and Hope's which marked the upturn in union fortunes, and acted as British representative to RILU headquarters in Moscow. Roberts later returned to industry and became a Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) branch secretary while remaining an active Communist.<sup>37</sup> Trevor Robinson (1902–1985), in contrast, was middle-class – his father was headmaster at a Church of England school – and his family opposed Communism because of their 'religious and petty bourgeois prejudices'.<sup>38</sup> After bouts of unemployment and victimisation, he found a safe berth as an engineer with Sheffield Corporation in 1922, later transferring to the Transport Department and switching from the AEU to the TGWU. A rebellious temperament and the exploitation he encountered in industry between 1920 and 1922 brought him into the party's orbit and after activity in the MM he joined in 1925. He spent two and a half years from 1927 at the ILS and became, on his own account, 'a paid party functionary' in Manchester and Sheffield.<sup>39</sup> After his spell on the CC, 1932–1935, he returned to the workshops. Prominent in the AEU, he convened the CPGB-sponsored Engineering and Allied Trades Shop Stewards' Council during World War II and from a base in the English Steel Corporation, became AEU Regional Organiser in 1947, a position he filled until he retired in 1966. Most of his career was spent working full-time for the reformist union he had once denigrated rather than the party, an increasingly common trajectory (Frow & Frow, 1982, pp. 453–454).

Born in Llanelly, Enoch Collins (1897–1979) was a lifelong militant who never held full-time union office. He enlisted in the army in 1914 but was discharged as unfit two years later. A foundation member, on the CC for most of the Third Period, he possessed support in the Welsh tinplate industry and the British Iron, Steel and Kindred Trades Association (BISAKTA) where, as animator of the Tinplate Workers' Rank-and-File Committee, the CPGB's fortunes in this sphere depended on him. His efforts to foster the rank-and-file

movement in 1933–1934 provoked temporary expulsion from the union, condemned as representing ‘the hatred of the reformist officials for a militant policy’ (*Daily Worker* [DW], 11 April 1933, 10 August 1934). Chair of Llanelly CPGB, Collins contested local elections on its behalf before and after World War II and stood as a Communist ‘demonstrative candidate’ in the 1931 General Election. In the post-war years he campaigned against rationalisation and closures, declaring in 1952: ‘I fought in the First World War. My son fought in the Second. Now we are both unemployed’ (Francis & Smith, 1980, p. 154; DW, 27 February, 30 October 1931, 17 April 1952). Another lifelong union militant, Felix Walsh (1890–1957), likewise survived the Third Period with his Communism intact. This Keighley-born woollen warp twister was active in establishing the CPGB in Bradford after service in the army, 1915–1919. He became prominent in the Yorkshire left, stood as a Communist in Bradford’s municipal elections in 1928, and as secretary of the ‘Central Rank and File Strike Committee’ played a leading role in the eight-week Yorkshire woollen strike of 1930. He remained a party stalwart, sentenced to three months in prison in 1940 for a speech in breach of the Defence Regulations. In 1947 he was elected President of his union, the Yorkshire Warp and Twister Society (*Yorkshire Post*, 25 October 1928; *Leeds Mercury*, 20 May 1930; *Bradford Observer*, 10 October 1940; [Walsh Felix – Graham Stevenson](#)).

With the election of Harry Webb (1892–1962) to the CC in January 1929, the wheel, it seemed, had turned full circle. Appearing on three committees 1921–1922, he attracted disapproval for a leftism which by 1929 had become fashionable. His restoration was brief and 11 months later he returned to relative obscurity. A veteran of the SLP and the CUG, he was the brother of Lily Webb and almost as outspoken. Characterised by a Comintern representative as having overcome his syndicalist tendencies, he was prominent around the party’s foundation and led its secret, Moscow-funded Supplementary Department and as National Organiser before briefly working as a DO in Lancashire and Yorkshire. Leaving the

CC in 1929, he worked in textiles and engineering and remained a party activist into the post-war years.<sup>40</sup>

### **Destination unknown, the disillusioned and the dropouts**

While the details of the Communist career of Harold ‘Hal’ Wilde (1900–1978) are reasonably clear, we know little about his later life. He was born in Crewe, the son of a railway clerk and a schoolteacher, volunteered for the army and served 1917–1919 before qualifying as a fitter and becoming active in the AEU. He travelled in Germany and Scandinavia, 1924–1925, studied at folk high schools, worked with the German Communist Youth and joined the CPGB on his return. Well-read in Marxism and working-class history as well as literature, philosophy and psychology, he studied briefly at Ruskin College and in 1927 was appointed DO in Sheffield. He was a party worker for four years before serving as a Comintern *praktikant* in Moscow and attending the ILS, 1930–1931. He may have come under a cloud for a less than full-blooded denunciation of his friend, J.T. Murphy, who was expelled in 1932, but thereafter disappears from the record.<sup>41</sup> The Monmouthshire miner, Garfield Williams (1901–?), was active from the early 1920s at the Bedwas Pit and in the Miners MM, producing the rank-and-file paper, *The Bedwas Rebel*. He served for a period as a DO, was prominent in the harrying of Arthur Horner, and contributed frequently to the *Daily Worker* between 1930 and 1932. Nonetheless, his elevation as a candidate member of the PB before the December 1929 Congress underlines the promotion of the relatively inexperienced that marked the Third Period. Thereafter, he vanished from the scene, reported to have taken up farming.<sup>42</sup>

His fellow countryman, Reginald ‘Reg’ Cosslett (1884–1968), a CC representative December 1929–1932, worked on the railways in South Wales before serving as a soldier, 1914–1918. Invoking his wartime service in 1927, he declared he was now ‘willing to shed



my blood on behalf of my class' (*South Wales Gazette*, 25 March 1927). Secretary of the NUR Cardiff No.9 branch, he stood as CPGB candidate for Cardiff Council in 1928: his 57 votes fell to 37 in 1930. He supported Horner's parliamentary candidature in 1933 but no further trace was found of another trade unionist who did not fulfil Comintern aspirations (*Western Mail*, 16 October 1928, 3 November 1930; *DW*, 13 March 1933). A working-class Londoner prominent in the YCL during the Third Period, Charles Frederick Lynch (1906–1968) was similarly destined for political obscurity. He worked as district secretary of the League in Sheffield in 1929 and was active in the Yorkshire woollen strikes. In December 1930 he represented the YCL in discussions on youth work in Britain and at the time of his appointment to the CC as YCL representative in November 1932 had published an authoritative article, 'The Party and the YCL' in the *Communist Review* which suggests he was a national officer of the League at that point. Having burnt brightly but briefly, he too disappeared.<sup>43</sup> So did Alexander McLean, who worked at the Cowlairst Railway Workshops, Glasgow, was active in the NUR and stood unavailingly as a Communist candidate for Glasgow Council on three occasions, although he secured a creditable 1,206 votes against Labour's successful 2,444 in Cowlairst Ward in November 1932 (*DW*, 3 November, 1, 27, 28 December 1932; 21 October, 9 November 1933, 27 October, 6 November 1934).

Charles Moody (1897–1971) and Ernest Wooley (1900–1989) both broke with the CPGB. A council worker from Richmond, Surrey, Moody led the left in the NUGMW and sat on the MM executive. His isolated resistance to the anti-Communist measures taken by the union leadership – he was the only member of the union's general council to oppose them – and his 22,700 votes in the 1926 contest for the union presidency – J.R. Clynes received 204,257 – suggested the unfavourable balance of forces the party faced. Nonetheless, his stand strengthened his profile in relation to the Comintern *desiderata* of the young militant and he advanced within the party, becoming a candidate member of the PB in 1929. Prudent

in guarding against victimisation, he was questionably a workplace activist: his employer reported him as making no attempt 'to propagate communism amongst his colleagues'.<sup>44</sup> He was not re-elected to the CC in 1932 and this may have been related to his being placed in charge of anti-militarist propaganda in the London district and the secrecy surrounding it. When he resurfaced in 1950 as the subject of MI5 enquiries into espionage, he convinced his interrogators that for years he had been 'a pillar of the Labour Party', a local magistrate and chair of the juvenile bench.<sup>45</sup>

After brief service in the RAF, Woolley, a Manchester engineer, founder of the CPGB and pioneer of the YCL, encountered the familiar pattern of victimisation and unemployment. He worked full-time for the party as a DO, in the YCL, in building factory groups, in the Workers' Legion/Workers' Defence Force and the unemployed movement and spent 1927 at the Comintern. Frequently in trouble with the police, his combative, rebellious temperament chimed with 'Class Against Class' and he was strident in criticism of the old, and sometimes the new, leadership. He joined the editorial staff of the *Daily Worker* and after his spell on the CC, spent 1936 in Moscow as its correspondent before travelling to Spain as one of the volunteers who worked in factories producing armaments. He was still in the CPGB in 1945 when he stood as a party candidate in the London elections, but disillusioned with Communism, he remarried and emigrated to Australia in 1949.<sup>46</sup>

## **Reflections**

The Comintern leader, Dimitri Manuilsky, an exacting examiner, concluded in January 1929 that it was difficult to fault the CPGB leadership's formal adherence to recent policy changes. It passed the right resolutions, pursued the right tactics and took a correct stand on central issues. More was required. The deficit lay in men and method, in a lack of inquisitorial severity in prosecuting the letter of 'the new line' and commitment to forensically probe

doubts, pursue them to their roots, extirpate error and disperse the fog of fraternity and freemasonry which contrasted unfavourably with the rigour that characterised other Comintern affiliates – he singled out the Polish and German sections. ‘The German comrades’, he observed, ‘carefully weigh every word spoken by anybody. They allow no deviation from the line. They attack the least deviation, respecting no persons’ (Pelling, 1958, pp. 45–46). If the Third Period was to succeed, if the final touches were to be put to the project of fashioning the national parties into more effective instruments of Stalin’s policy, the Comintern required cadres capable of executing the line more efficiently. Forestalling imperialist intervention which would endanger the programme of non-capitalist primary accumulation directed by the Soviet state imported urgency to the project. Registering the undoubted support the Soviet-initiated Third Period enjoyed from British Communists as an antidote to years of frustration and failure is different from asserting that ‘Class Against Class’ had, in any significant sense, British causes.

This article has examined how one aspect of Stalinist strategy, remaking the Communist leadership, played out in Britain. The CC underwent restructuring: ‘right wingers’ who had directed the party since its inception and personified its failure, were removed. Although some continued in lower echelons of the apparatus, replacement of those who allegedly embodied the traditions of the CPGB’s ‘sectarian’ forerunners demanded of the Comintern in 1923 by British ‘Bolshevists’, notably Dutt and Pollitt, came to pass. The fresh blood then demanded was now injected (McIlroy & Campbell, 2020a, pp. 424, 449). A battalion of ingenues took the stage, the scene seemed set for developing a revitalised cadre wedded to political rigour. Despite strenuous efforts, this did not happen. The hostile environment which interacted malignly with policies dysfunctional from a Marxist as well as reformist perspective, centred on a fictive pre-revolutionary situation, saw to that. The difficulties also lay in the quality of human agency a weak party could deploy. Lenin had

insisted that production of proletarian leaders was a test of the vigour of a revolutionary organisation: ‘Any vital workers’ movement will put forth worker leaders, its Proudhons and Vaillants, its Weitlings and Bebels’ (quoted Lih, 2005, p. 345). The lifelong Bolshevik, I. I. Radchenko, forecast: ‘soon we will see our Bebels. Genuine lathe turners/revolutionaries ... longing to get down to business – not like the local intelligentsia who treat [revolutionary work] like a dessert after dinner’ (quoted Lih, 2005, p. 544).

In Third Period Britain, attempts to develop intimate links between the CC and the workplace, the cockpit of the productive process, and construct a leadership with its feet in the factories and its head in Soviet Communism, creating a network which would facilitate mobilisation of workers in anti-capitalist struggle, faltered in face of unemployment, employer power, victimisation and fear. Instead, what emerged was augmentation of the full-time functionaries on the CC with former workplace representatives transferred from industry to the party payroll. Rather than party initiative infused with grassroots intelligence stimulating and coordinating action in the workplace, the most that was achieved was a CC potentially closer to aspects of contemporary working-class experience than the Old Guard had been. Cadre building was further compromised by problems of retention, the brief sojourn of many on the committee and the number who served a single term before returning to the ranks. Ephemeral engagement at the top provided restricted opportunities for schooling in leadership: in a context where high turnover, instability and disorganisation in both party and CC militated against induction into the effective practice of party governance and membership mobilisation.

In terms of a cadre which combined theoretical acumen with educated practice, most Newcomers possessed a superficial grounding in the fundamentals of Marxism – although acquisition of greater knowledge may have generated ideas which challenged Stalinist dogma. They certainly wanted to get down to business. But in contrast to somewhat idealised

depiction of worker-leaders, they were generally more run-of-the-mill. Agitators, militant trade unionists, dedicated to the Soviet Union, as ‘tribunes of the people’, they appear of questionable calibre. Spectral figures such as Parcell and Miss Phillipson suggest a restricted supply of able activists and the weakness of the CPGB. In the ILS, the Comintern offered the opportunity for formal training. But it concentrated on Russian ideas and the prevailing line and provided a catechetical induction in doctrine, inculcation of fidelity to Stalinism and credentialling of loyalism rather than a preparation for effective practice in Britain (McIlroy & Campbell, 2003, pp. 100–101, 108–109). These were unusual people, determined to vanquish capitalism. They were ‘people of a special mould’ in a specific and, in Marxist terms, limited sense. Their discipline and existential commitment to the Comintern and the Soviet Union, their faith in a minority cause directed from a foreign capital, is what stands out and remains of enduring interest to the historian. They demonstrated, at least on the record, negligible political autonomy still less original thought, indeed their orthodoxy and lack of independent attitudes is remarkable. They were people in the conformist mould Stalin and the Comintern required, although Moscow would doubtless have appreciated more creative thinking – within political boundaries it defined.

The historian of women and the CPGB observed:

The extreme sectarianism of the Third Period was a disaster for the party. As membership rapidly dwindled, women comrades were fully occupied in trying to keep ‘mainstream’ party work going and were even less inclined than before to conduct work specifically aimed at women. (Bruley, 1985, p. 133)

Female presence on the CC – which reflected their minority share of membership and subordinate role in the party conditioned by prevailing conceptions of gender – more than doubled; throughout the Third Period it remained small. The inability to create a kernel of women leaders, an objective which might have been facilitated by the call for new blood, was undermined by the brief time the handful of women who were elected served. Female reticence as well as male chauvinism may have been a factor – there is scant evidence of a

reservoir of likely women candidates for leadership positions. Little beyond the rhetorical was done by way of institutional encouragement, although women were canvassed to attend the ILS and through its history they made up some 17% of CPGB students (McIlroy & Campbell, 2003, p. 117).

If progress towards women's liberation was slight, 'Class Against Class' eroded the CPGB's already weak base in the trade unions. Only a small number drafted on to the CC at this time – McGree, McLennan, Moffat, Robinson, as well as the more experienced Hannington and Horner – played a significant part in the CPGB's expansion in industry later in the 1930s. They retained their Stalinism; their engagement with the party diminished and their pursuit of militancy was calibrated compared with these years. They remained assets but trade union rather than political cadres.

The renewal of the leadership was restricted. Pollitt, Gallacher, at a distance, Dutt, remained as in the early 1920s the outstanding figures. They were joined later in the Third Period by Campbell, who had emerged from 1923, on his return from rehabilitation in Moscow, and Rust, who first served on the CC in 1925 but was very much a leading actor in 'Class Against Class'. In the early 1930s, these figures were paramount as power became concentrated in a smaller Secretariat and PB. Kerrigan and Robson – on the CC from 1927, Allison and Cox, also arrived as significant, secondary figures and continued as leaders into the 1940s. None, with the partial exception of Rust, who died in 1949, came to challenge the leading figures of the early 1920s and no mass leader was thrown up by the upheaval in politics and personnel that characterised the years 1928–1934. What Eric Hobsbawm (1973, p. 58) termed 'the lunacies of Comintern policy during the notorious so-called Third Period ... when the Communist movement in Europe was at its lowest ebb', produced upheaval. But not revitalisation of a party which, without Soviet resources would, in all likelihood, have

fulfilled, albeit in unforeseen fashion, Comintern predictions that the Third Period was the final period by disappearing from British politics.

**Table 1. CPGB Central Committee elected at 10<sup>th</sup> Congress, January 1929.**

William Allan, Robin Page Arnot, Tom Bell, Frank Bright\*, Ernest Brown, John Ross Campbell, Idris Cox\*\*, Helen Crawford, Rajani Palme Dutt, William Gallacher, Percy Glading, Wal Hannington, Arthur Horner, Albert Inkpin, Thomas Jackson, William Joss, Peter Kerrigan, W.C. Loeber, Charles J. Moody\*, J.T. Murphy, Harry Pollitt, Marjorie Pollitt\*, R.W. Robson, Andrew Rothstein, Bob Stewart, Walter Tapsell (YCL)\*, Beth Turner, Nat Watkins, Lily Webb\*, J.R. Wilson.

**Abbreviation: YCL: Young Communist League**

**Notes:** \* = newcomer to CC \*\*= newcomer to CC re-elected between 1935 and 1945.

Percentage newcomers: 20%

**Source:** Branson (1985, p. 339).

**Table 2. CPGB Central Committee elected at 11<sup>th</sup> Congress, December 1929.**

William Allan, George Allison\*\*, Jim Ancrum\*, Robin Page Arnot, John Ross Campbell, Enoch Collins\*, Reg Cosslett\*, Annie Cree\*, Idris Cox, Kath Duncan\*, Rajani Palme Dutt, William Gallacher, Wal Hannington, Alex Hermon\*, Charles Hoyle\*, William Joss, Leo McGree<sup>1</sup>, Abe Moffat\*\*, Charles J. Moody, J.T. Murphy, J. Parcell<sup>2</sup>, Miss Phillipson\*, Harry Pollitt, R.W. Robson, William Rust, James Rushton\*, Joe Scott\*\*, Jimmy Shields\*\*, George Short\*, Walter Tapsell\*, Nellie Usher\*, Felix Walsh<sup>3</sup>, Harry Webb<sup>4</sup>, Garfield Williams\*, Hal Wilde\*, Ernest Woolley\*.

**Notes:** \* = newcomer to CC \*\*= newcomer to CC re-elected between 1935 and 1945.

Percentage newcomers: 64%

1. McGree was re-elected in 1949 and 1952.
2. For Parcell, see note 9 at end of article.
3. For Walsh see note 9 at end of article.



4. Harry Webb had previously served from January 1921 – October 1922.

**Source:** Branson (1985, p. 340).

**Table 3. CPGB Central Committee elected at 12<sup>th</sup> Congress, November 1932.**

William Allan, Robin Page Arnot, Ted Bramley\*\*, John Ross Campbell, Enoch Collins, Idris Cox, Rajani Palme Dutt, William Gallacher, Jim Garnett\*, Lewis Jones\*, Peter Kerrigan, Charles F. Lynch (YCL)\*, Leo McGree\*, Bob McIlhone\*\*, Alexander McLean\*, Bob McLennan\*\*, Abe Moffat, Harry Pollitt, Tom Roberts\*, Trevor Robinson\*, R.W. Robson, William Rust, Joe Scott, Jimmy Shields, George Short, Rose Smith\*\*, Dave Springhall\*\*, Sarah Wesker\*, Bert Williams\*, Ernest Woolley.

**Abbreviation: YCL:** Young Communist League

**Notes:** \* = newcomer to CC \*\*= newcomer re-elected between 1935 and 1945.

Percentage newcomers: 47%

**Source:** Branson (1985, p. 340).

**Table 4 The Old Guard: CC members elected before 1929 who did not survive on the CC beyond January or December 1929.**

Name (Date of Birth)	Date joined party	Age in 1930	Number of CCs 1920-1928	CC January 1929	CC December 1929
Tom Bell (1882)	1920	48	8	Yes	No
Ernest Brown (1892)	1921	38	4	Yes	No
Helen Crawford (1877)	1921	53	5	Yes	No
Percy Glading (1893)	1922	37	1	Yes	No
Albert Inkpin (1884)	1920	46	10	Yes	No
Tommy Jackson (1879)	1920	51	5	Yes	No
W.C. Loeber (1891)	n/a	39	2	Yes	No
Andrew Rothstein (1898)	1920	32	5	Yes	No
Beth Turner (1894)	1921	36	4	Yes	No
Nat Watkins (1874)	1920	56	4	Yes	No
J.R. Wilson (1884)	1921	46	3	Yes	No
Bill Joss (1884)	1920	46	3	Yes	Yes
J.T. Murphy (1888)	1920	42	8	Yes	Yes

**Table 5. The Continuity Group: CC members elected before 1929 who continued to serve on the CC after 1929**

Name (Date of Birth)	Date joined party	Age in 1930	Number of CCs 1920–1928	Number of CC's 1929–1932	Number of CCs from 1935 onwards	Total number of CCs
William Allan (1900)	1923	30	2	3	1	6
Robin Page Arnot (1890)	1920	40	4	3	2	9
J.R. Campbell (1894)	1921	36	5	3	16	24
R. Palme Dutt (1896)	1920	34	6	3	16	25
William Gallacher (1881)	1921	49	7	3	15	25
Wal Hannington (1896)	1920	34	5	2	1	8
Arthur Horner (1894)	1921	36	5	1	9	15
Peter Kerrigan (1899)	1921	31	1	2	16	19
Harry Pollitt (1890)	1920	40	6	3	14	23
R.W. Robson (1897)	1922	33	2	3	1	6
William Rust (1903)	1920	27	5	2	8	15
Bob Stewart (1877)	1920	53	7	1	1	9

**Sources:** McIlroy & Campbell (2020a, pp. 425–427); McIlroy & Campbell (2021a, pp. 210–211); Branson (1985, pp. 339–342); Branson (1997, p. 253).

**Table 6. Newcomers: new members of CPGB Central Committee, elected at 10<sup>th</sup> Congress, January 1929, 11<sup>th</sup> Congress, December 1929 and 12<sup>th</sup> Congress, November 1932.**

Name	January 1929	December 1929	November 1932	Total 1929–32	Number of CCs 1935–45
George ALLISON	-	√	-	1	5
Jim ANCRUM	-	√	-	1	0
Ted BRAMLEY	-	-	√	1	6
Frank BRIGHT	√	-	-	1	0
Enoch COLLINS	-	√	√	2	0
Reg COSLETT	-	√	-	1	0
Idris COX	√	√	√	2	6
Annie CREE	-	√	-	1	0
Kath DUNCAN	-	√	-	1	0
Jim GARNETT	-	-	√	1	0
Alec HERMON	-	√	-	1	0
Charles HOYLE	-	√	-	1	0
Lewis JONES	-	-	√	1	0
Charles Frederick LYNCH (YCL)	-	-	√	1	0
Leo McGREE <sup>1</sup>	-	√	√	2	0
Bob McILHONE	-	-	√	1	1
Alexander McLEAN	-	-	√	1	0
Bob McLENNAN	-	-	√	1	2
Abe MOFFAT <sup>2</sup>	-	√	√	2	2
Charles J. MOODY	√	√	-	2	0
J. PARCELL	-	√	-	1	0
Miss PHILLIPSON	-	√	-	1	0
Marjorie POLLITT	√	-	-	1	0
Tom ROBERTS	-	-	√	1	0
Trevor ROBINSON	-	-	√	1	0
James RUSHTON	-	√	-	1	0
Joe SCOTT	-	√	√	2	4
Jimmy SHIELDS <sup>3</sup>	-	√	√	2	1
George SHORT	-	√	√	2	0
Rose SMITH	-	-	√	1	2
Dave SPRINGHALL	-	-	√	1	3
Walter TAPSELL	√	√	-	2	0
Nellie USHER	-	√	-	1	0
Felix WALSH	-	√	-	1	0
Harry WEBB	-	√	-	1	0
Lily WEBB	√	-	-	1	0
Sarah WESKER	-	-	√	1	0
Hal WILDE	-	√	-	1	0
Bert WILLIAMS	-	-	√	1	0
Garfield WILLIAMS	-	√	-	1	0

Ernie WOOLLEY	-	√	√	2	0
Total CC membership	30	36	30		
Number of new CC members (%)	6 (20.0%)	22 (63.9%)	13 (43.3%)		
Number of new CC members from the 1929–1932 cohort	6 (20.0%)	25 (69.4%)	21 (70.0%)		

### Notes

1. McGree was re-elected to the CC in 1949 and 1952.
2. Moffat was re-elected to the CC in 1947 and 1949 and made later appearances in the 1950s.
3. Shields did not appear on the CC after 1935 due to his involvement in secret work but remained a member of the party leadership.

**Sources:** Branson (1985, pp. 339–342); Branson (1997, p. 253).

**Table 7. Third Period Survivors: new members of the Central Committee, 1929-1935, who served 1935-1945.**

	1935	1937	1938	1943	1944	1945	Total
George ALLISON	√	√	-	√	√	√	<b>5</b>
Ted BRAMLEY	√	√	√	√	√	√	<b>6</b>
Idris COX	√	√	√	√	√	√	<b>6</b>
Bob McILHONE	√	-	-	-	-	-	<b>1</b>
Bob McLENNAN	-	-	-	√	√	-	<b>2</b>
Abe MOFFAT	√	-	-	√	-	-	<b>2</b>
Joe SCOTT	-	√	-	√	√	√	<b>4</b>
Jimmy SHIELDS	√	-	-	-	-	-	<b>1</b>
Rose SMITH	√	√	-	-	-	-	<b>2</b>
Dave SPRINGHALL	√	√	√	-	-	-	<b>3</b>

**Note:** McGree has not been included as he did not serve 1935–1945, although re-elected 1949, 1952.

**Sources:** Branson (1985, pp. 341–342); Branson (1997, p. 253).

**Appendix 1. ‘The Old Guard’, CPGB Central Committee in the Third Period.**

<b>Name Date/place of birth</b>	<b>Social origins Father’s occupation</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Pre-Communist affiliations</b>	<b>Joined/left CPGB (date of death)</b>
Tom <b>BELL</b> 1882 Glasgow	Working-class F: Steelworker	Iron moulder; munitions worker; party worker; journalist	ILP; SDF; SLP; IWGB; CWC; NSS&WCM; CUG	1920 (d.1944)
Ernest <b>BROWN</b> 1892 Bingley, Yorkshire	Working-class F: Plasterer	Boot repairer; party worker; editor	NCF; ILP Left Wing [CO]	1921 (d.1960)
Helen <b>CRAWFURD</b> 1877 Glasgow	Middle-class F: Master baker	Independent means; party worker	Temperance movement; WSPU; ILP Left Wing	1921 (d.1954)
Percy <b>GLADING</b> 1893 London	Working-class F: Labourer	Engineer; gun examiner; munitions worker; party worker; AEU worker	SDP/BSP	1920 (d.1970)
Albert <b>INKPIN</b> 1884 London	Working-class F: Cabinetmaker	Office boy; clerk; party worker	SDF/SDP/BSP	1920 (d.1944)
T.A. <b>JACKSON</b> 1879 London	Working-class F: Composer	Composer; social/political lecturer; party worker; writer	SDF; SPGB; SLP; CUG	1920 (d.1955)
William <b>JOSS</b> 1884 Arbroath	Working-class F: Gardener	Mill mechanic; engineer (fitter); tutor at SLC; party worker	SLP sympathiser; ILP	1920 (d.1967)
William <b>LOEBER</b> 1891 London	Working-class F: Dustman	Army service; railway carriage cleaner		left 1940. (d.1965)
J.T. <b>MURPHY</b> 1888 Manchester	Working-class F: Blacksmith’s striker	Clerk; turner in toolroom; munitions worker; party worker	SLP; NSS&WCM	1920; left 1932 (d.1965)
Andrew <b>ROTHSTEIN</b> 1898 London	Middle-class F: Diplomat	Oxford University; Army 1917–1919, journalist; university lecturer	BSP	1920 (d.1994)
Elizabeth ‘Beth’ <b>TURNER</b> 1894 Keighley, Yorks.	Working-class F: Engine tenter	Worsted spinner; party worker; office worker	ILP; Bradford Women’s Humanity League	1921; left early 1930s (d.1988)

Nat <b>WATKINS</b> 1874 Pencoed, Glamorgan	Working-class F: Mason	Coal miner; party worker; commercial engineer	Miners' Unofficial Reform Movement; ILP; NSS&WCM	1920 (d.1952)
J.R. "Jock" <b>WILSON</b> 1884 Mull, Argyllshire	Working-class F: Gamekeeper	Miller; clerk; SPA organiser; docker; ILP organizer; party worker	SDF/SDP; SPA; IWW; ILP	1921; emigrated 1930s (d.1976)

**Note:** For further information see McIlroy & Campbell (2021a, pp. 238–253).

#### Appendix 2. 'Continuity Group', CPGB Central Committee in the Third Period.

Name Date/place of birth	Social origins Father's occupation	Occupation trade union	Pre-Communist affiliations	Joined CPGB (date of death)
William <b>ALLAN</b> 1900 Blantyre, Lanarkshire	Working-class F: Coal miner	Coal miner; checkweighman; union official; party worker	SLP; Scottish Miners' Section, NSS&WCM	1923; left 1956 (d.1970)
Robin Page <b>ARNOT</b> 1890 Greenock	Middle class F: Weaver; journalist	Glasgow University; LRD; party worker	USF; ILP; Guilds League Communists [CO]	1920 (d.1986)
J.R. <b>CAMPBELL</b> 1894 Paisley	Working-class F: Slater	Army, 1914–18; grocer's shop assistant; journalist; party worker	BSP; CWC; NSS&WCM	1921 (d.1969)
Rajani Palme <b>DUTT</b> 1896 Cambridge	Middle-class F: Doctor	Oxford University; schoolteacher; LRD; party worker	ILP; Guilds League Communists [CO]	1920 (d.1974)
William <b>GALLACHER</b> 1881 Paisley	Working-class F: Labourer	Brass finisher; munitions worker; party worker	ILP; SDF/SDP/BSP; CWC; NSS&WCM; CLP	1921 (d.1965)
Wal <b>HANNINGTON</b> 1896 London	Working-class F: Bricklayer	Engineer (toolmaker); party worker; union official	BSP; NSS&WCM; NUWCM	1920 (d.1966)
Arthur <b>HORNER</b> 1894 Merthyr Tydfil	Working-class F: Railway porter	Grocer's assistant; checkweighman; party worker; union official	ILP; Unofficial Reform Committee; SWSS [CO]	1921 (d.1968)

Peter <b>KERRIGAN</b> 1899 Glasgow	Working-class F: Hammerman	Army service, 1918–1920; iron turner; party worker		1921 (d.1977)
Harry <b>POLLITT</b> 1890 Manchester	Working-class F: Blacksmith’s striker	Boilermaker; party worker	ILP; BSP; WSF	1920 (d.1960)
R.W. <b>ROBSON</b> 1897 Guisborough, Yorks.	Working-class F: Iron ore miner	Army, 1916–18; labourer, ILP organiser; party worker	ILP; LP	1922 (d.1973)
William <b>RUST</b> 1903 London	Working-class F: Bookbinder	Office worker; party worker	LP	1920 (d.1949)
Bob <b>STEWART</b> 1877 Eassie, Angus	Working-class F: Farm worker; carter	Mill worker; carpenter; political/ union organiser; party worker	Scottish Prohibition Party; associated with CUG [CO]	1920 (d.1971)

**Note:** For further information see McIlroy & Campbell (2021a, pp. 238–253).

### Appendix 3. Newcomers to CPGB Central Committee in the Third Period

<b>Name</b> <b>Date/place of birth</b> <b>Nationality</b> <b>Age in 1930</b>	<b>Social origins</b>	<b>Occupation/ trade union</b>	<b>Pre- Communist affiliations</b>	<b>a. CCs 1929–32</b>  <b>b. CCs 1935–45</b>	<b>Joined/left CPGB (date of death)</b>  <b>CPGB office</b>	<b>Spouse/partner</b> <b>Birthplace</b> <b>Occupation</b> <b>Father’s occupation</b> <b>Date of marriage</b> <b>Political affiliation</b>
George <b>ALLISON</b> 1895 Hill of Beath, Fife Scottish 35	Working-class F: Coalminer M: Housewife	Coalminer; party worker FKCMA	SLP	a. 1  b. 5	1920 (d.1953) CPGB mission to India, 1926–1928; UMS organiser; Secretary, MM; British Representative, RILU; RILU Congress	Doris Dorothy Kerr (1900–1986) London English Shorthand typist; party worker; Soviet embassy employee F: Printing engineer

					delegate; DO; National Secretary, <i>Daily Worker</i> Defence Leagues, 1940–41; National Industrial Organiser	Previously married to George W. Vandome (1924). m.1939 BSP; CPGB
James <b>ANCRUM</b> 1898 Felling-On-Tyne, Durham English 32	Working-class F: Coalminer M: Housewife Methodist	Coalminer; Royal Navy, 1915–19; party worker DMA (expelled 1931)		a. 1 b. 0	1926 (d.1946) Secretary, Durham MMM; Executive, MM; WIR organiser; National Organiser, NUWCM; ILS, 1931–32; Gateshead Councillor, 1935–46	Frances Jane Gibbon (1899–1973) Gateshead, Durham English Tobacco factory worker F: Blacksmith’s striker m.1920 CPGB
Edward Frank ‘Ted’ <b>BRAMLEY</b> 1905 Lambeth, London English 25	Working-class F: Porter SDF member; IWW supporter M: Charwoman, Soviet Embassy Suffragette	Engine fitter; chauffeur; party worker; farmer AEU	LP	a. 1 b. 6	1927 (d.1989) DO; London County Councillor for Stepney, 1945–46, 1948–49	1. Agnes Mary Merrick Sisson (1910–1959) known as “Molly Bramley” cohabited but no evidence they were married CPGB 2. Kathleen Margaret Ogilvie (1917–2002) London English Typist F: Private means m.1939 Secretary. Cambridge University Socialist Club; CPGB
Frank <b>BRIGHT</b> 1891 Bideford, Devon English 39	Working-class F: Blacksmith M: Clothing machinist; housewife	Miner; labourer; party worker SWMF	Unofficial Reform Committee; SWSS; CP-BSTI	a. 1 b. 0	1920 (d.1944) DO; Communist parliamentary candidate; ILS, 1930–31	



<p><b>Enoch COLLINS</b> 1897 Llanelly, Carmarthenshire Welsh 33</p>	<p>Working-class F: Bar cutter, Tinplate works M: Housewife</p>	<p>Tinplate labourer; Army, 1914–16, discharged physically unfit BISAKTA (Branch Chair)</p>		<p>a. 2 b. 0</p>	<p>1921? (d.1979) Chair, Llanelly CPGB; Communist candidate Llanelly council elections; CPGB ‘demonstrative’ parliamentary candidate; South Wales District Ctee, CPGB</p>	<p>Margaret Millicent Morgan (1896–1981) Llanelly Welsh F: Rollerwoman, Tinworks m.1919</p>
<p><b>Reginald A. COSSLETT</b> 1884 Marshfield, Monmouthshire Welsh 46</p>	<p>Working-class F: Thatcher M: Housewife</p>	<p>Railway porter; Army, 1914–18; scavenger cart driver; labourer NUR (Branch Secretary and South Wales EC of NUR)</p>		<p>a. 1 b. 0</p>	<p>(d.1968) Communist candidate in Cardiff council elections</p>	<p>Margaret Scanlan (1882–1951) Newport Welsh F: Lock labourer m.1904</p>
<p><b>Idris COX</b> 1899 Maesteg, Glamorgan Welsh 31</p>	<p>Working-class F: Colliery roadman M: Housewife Non-conformist</p>	<p>Miner; CLC, 1923– 25; NCLC tutor; party worker SWMF (Lodge Chair); CAWU</p>	<p>Maesteg Labour Party (Vice Chair)</p>	<p>a. 2 b. 6</p>	<p>1923 (d.1989) DO; NO; Comintern Congress delegate; Editor, <i>Daily Worker</i>, 1935–36, <i>DWEB</i>, 1937–39; Parliamentary Department; International Department</p>	<p>Dora Roberts (1904–2000) London English Clerk in Russian companies F: ROP manager m.1931 YCL, CPGB</p>
<p><b>Annie CREE</b> (née Mellor) 1891 Chesterfield, Derbyshire English 39</p>	<p>Working-class F: Wages clerk M: Housewife</p>	<p>Housewife</p>	<p>BSP; Labour Party</p>	<p>a. 1 b. 0</p>	<p>1922 (d.1957) Sheffield Board of Guardians</p>	<p>Sidney Herbert Cree (1889–1958) Chesterfield English Fitter and turner; ROP worker F: Tailor</p>

						m.1913 CPGB
Katharine Sinclair <b>'Kath' DUNCAN</b> (née MacColl) 1888 Tarbert, Argyllshire Scottish 42	Middle-class F: Merchant M: Housewife	St Andrews University; schoolteacher NUT	Suffragette; ILP; Hackney Labour Dramatic Group (WTM);	a. 1 b. 0	1926 (d.1954) NUWCM activist	Alexander 'Sandy' Duncan (1893–1941) Old Kilpatrick, Dunbartonshire Scottish School teacher F: Railway goods supervisor m.1923 CPGB
James <b>GARNETT</b> 1894 Tiverton, Devon English 36	Working-class M: charwoman (widow)	Cotton weaver; Army, 1914–18; AWA	LP, resigned 1927	a. 1 b. 0	1923 (d.1980) ILS, 1930–31; Secretary, Cotton Workers Solidarity Movement, 1932	Bridget Melvin (1901–1982) Cotton weaver m.1924
Alexander Victor <b>HERMON</b> 1900 Willesden, London English 30	Working-class F: Tinsmith M: Laundress	Electrician; party worker ETU (expelled 1931; re-admitted 1932)	ILP/LP (1919)	a. 1 b. 0	1920 (d.1936) Comintern rep., 1929–30; Industrial Department; ILS, 1932–35; Comintern worker, Shanghai, 1934, Berlin, 1935	
Charles <b>HOYLE</b> 1901 Rochdale, Lancs. English 29	Working-class F: Weaver; iron dresser M: Weaver; housewife	Toolmaker; party worker AEU (National Committee member)	Sec., Altrincham and Stretford ILP Federation; NCLC	a. 1 b. 0	1921 (d.1987) Party propagandist, 1921– 22; DO; Sec. Liverpool NLWM; Sec. Liverpool MM; ILS, 1930–31	Helen 'Nellie' O'Rourke (1905–1980) Liverpool English F: Rubber porter m.1930 YCL; CPGB
Lewis Richard <b>JONES</b>	Working-class Illegitimate	Miner; checkweighman;		a. 1 b. 0	1923 (d.1939)	1.Elizabeth Mary Jones (1898–?) F: Timberman

1897 Blaenclydach, Rhondda 33	M: Domestic servant	CLC, 1923–25; party worker SWMF (Lodge Chair)			Organiser, NUWCM; DO; Comintern Congress delegate; Councillor, 1936–39, Glamorgan County Council	2. Mavis Llewellyn (1908–1978) Nantymoel, Ogmere Vale Welsh School teacher F: Miner Never married CPGB
Charles Frederick <b>LYNCH</b> 1906 St Pancras, London English 24	Working-class F: Postman M: Housewife	Clerk; party worker		a. 1 b. 0	(d.1968) Sec., Sheffield YCL, 1929; YCL national official, 1932	Joan Mary Carey (1911–1997) Lambeth, London English Illegitimate m.1932
Leo <b>McGREE</b> 1900 Birkenhead, Cheshire English 30	Working-class F: Carpenter (Irish) M: Housewife	Carpenter; union official ASW; District Sec., Building Trades Federation; District Pres., CSEU		a. 2 b. 0 [also 1949, 1952]	1924 (d.1967) NUWCM activist; DO	Henrietta ‘Hetty’ Smith (1903–1979) Sheffield English F: Licensed victualler m.1921 CPGB
Robert Young ‘Bob’ <b>McILHONE</b> 1902 Bellshill, Lanarkshire Scottish 28	Working-class F: Steelworker M: Housewife	Baker’s apprentice; clerk; steelworker; party worker; translator; CAWU	ILP (left 1922)	a. 1 b. 1	1923 (d.1966) YCL Exec.; ILS, 1927–30; DO; <i>DWEB</i> ; Comintern rep., 1934–35; Organization Dept; Scottish organiser; Glasgow District Secretary; Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow	Jean Leslie Gibson (1908–?) Govanhill, Glasgow Scottish Bakery worker F: Bookkeeper m. 1927 (divorced 1950) CPGB; ILS, 1934–35

Alexander <b>McLEAN</b>	Working-class	Cowlairs Railway Workshop, Glasgow; NUR (secretary, Departmental Committee)		a. 1 b. 0	Candidate for Cowlairs ward, Glasgow Council elections, 1931, 1932, 1933	
Robert Graham 'Bob' <b>McLENNAN</b> 1906 Dennistoun, Glasgow Scottish 24	Working-class F: Plumber M: Housewife	Electrician; party worker ETU (Assistant General Sec.; expelled 1962)	LP; NCLC student	a. 1 b. 2	1925; expelled 1962 (d.1981) ILS, 1930–31; DO; Scottish MM organiser; National Organiser, NUWCM; CPGB National Fraction Leader, Electrical Industry	Isabella Scouller McFarlane (née Jarvie) (1908–1986) Camlachie, Glasgow F: motor mechanic From 1934, known as 'Mrs McLennan' but no evidence married CPGB
Abraham 'Abe' <b>MOFFAT</b> 1896 Lumphinnans, Fife Scottish 34	Working-class F: Miner M: Pithead worker until marriage F: Lay preacher, Plymouth Brethren	Mine; Army, 1917–18; checkweighman; union official FKCMA; MRU; UMS (organiser, General Sec.); NUSMW (executive); MFGB (executive); NUM (executive; Scottish area president)		a. 2 b. 2	1923 (d.1975) Parish councillor, 1924–1929; Comintern Congress delegate; DO; County councillor	1. Euphemia Dickson (1898–1920) F: General labourer 2. Helen McNair (1904–1985) F: Miner m.1924 CPGB
Charles John <b>MOODY</b> 1897 Richmond, Surrey English 33	Working-class F: General Labourer M: Housewife CofE	Dustman; Council motor driver; council foreman NUGMW		a. 2 b. 0	(d.1971) Executive, MM (miscellaneous unions); in charge of anti-militarist propaganda, London district, 1933	Gerty Isaacs (1893–?) Rochester, Kent F: Rabbi Russian immigrant parents m.1927 CPGB

					Later LP and magistrate	
<b>J. PARCELL</b>				a. 1 b. 0		
<b>Miss PHILLIPSON</b>				a. 1 b. 0		
Marjorie Edna <b>POLLITT</b> (née Saul, Brewer by adoption) 1902 London English28	Middle-class Illegitimate F: Organist and choirmaster Adoptive Mother: music teacher, widow of master baker	School teacher; secretary; party worker NUT	ILP	a. 1 b.0	1924 Emigrated to Australia, 1965 (d.1991, Australia) Comintern Congress delegate; ILS, 1929–30; London District Committee	Harry Pollitt (1890–1960) Droylsden, Manchester English Boilermaker F: Blacksmith’s striker m.1925 CPGB (general secretary)
Thomas <b>ROBERTS</b> 1891 Barrow in Furness, Lancs. English 39	Working-class F: Railway signalman M: Housewife	Agricultural labourer; builder’s labourer; iron ore worker; USA, 1914–15; ROP worker; party worker; navy; Bakelite factory worker TGWU (branch secretary)	ILP/LP (expelled 1924)	a. 1 b. 0	1924 (d.1954) Councillor, Stafford Town Council, 1923–26; ILS, 1930–31; DO; British representative to RILU	Hannah Gilbert (1893–1974) Pennington, Lancs. English F: Iron miner m.1915
Trevor Mendelsohn <b>ROBINSON</b> 1902 Sheffield English 28	Middle-class F: Head teacher	Engineer; party worker; union official ASE; AEU; TGWU; AEU (convenor, District Secretary)		a. 1 b. 0	1925 (d.1985) ILS, 1927–30; DO; Convenor, EATSSNC	Olive Lillian Abernethy née Bushell (1910–1972) Salford, Lancs. English F: Rubber worker m.1937

James <b>RUSHTON</b> 1885 Haslingden, Lancs. English 45	Working-class F: Cotton weaver	Cotton weaver; Army; electrician; general labourer AWA (expelled 1928); GMWU	BSP; LP	a. 1  b. 0	1921 (d.1955) NUWCM activist; CPGB parliamentary candidate	1. Mary Elizabeth Kershaw (1878–1950) Haslingden, Lancashire English Cotton weaver F: Cotton weaver m.1906 2. Mary Harrison Former cotton weaver m.1951
Joseph Reading 'Joe' <b>SCOTT</b> 1900 Willesden, London English 30	Working-class F: Carpenter Irish	Toolmaker; party worker; union official AEU (temporarily expelled 1931; Divisional officer, Executive Council member)		a. 2  b. 1	1924 (d.1981) Organiser, Islington branch; Sec., Metalworkers MM; Sec., MM; Metal Advisory Committee; <i>DW</i> EB	1. Rhoda E. Norris (1896–1985) Islington, London English F: Carman contractor m.1920, later separated 2. Miriam Edelman (1914–2011) Glasgow Scottish Secretary; LRD worker F: Cigarette maker (Russian, Jewish) Cohabited 1942–1949 CPGB
James 'Jimmy' <b>SHIELDS</b> 1900 Greenock, Renfrewshire Scottish 30	Working-class F: House painter M: Housewife	Apprentice boatbuilder; railway engine cleaner; Army, 1918–19; shipyard worker; engineering worker; party worker NUGMW; NUC		a. 2  b. 1	1921 (d.1949) Sec., Greenock CPGB; National Executive, YCL; Chairman, CPSA; NUWCM organiser; ICWPA, London; ILD;	1. Violet MacDougall (1899–?) Port Glasgow, Renfrewshire Scottish F: Blacksmith 2. Victoria 'Vicki' Darragh (1907–?)

					UMS organiser, 1929–31; Industrial Dept; Organization Dept; Editor, <i>Daily Worker</i> , 1932–33, 1936–37; Comintern rep., 1932; Control Commission; International Dept	Journalist Cohabited from late 1930s
George <b>SHORT</b> 1900 High Spenn, Durham English 30	Working-class F: Miner M: Schoolteacher; housewife	Miner; party worker; builders' labourer; electrician; chemical worker DMA; CAWU; ETU; NUGMW	LP; NCLC student	a. 1 b. 0	1926 (d.1994) Sec., Tyneside NLWM; Sec., Tyneside FOSU; ILS, 1930–31; NUWCM organiser; DO	Margaret Phyllis Waugh (1903–1979) Durham English Shopworker F: Miner m.1920 CPGB; NUWCM activist
Rosina 'Rose' <b>SMITH</b> (née Ellis) 1891 London English 39	Working-class F: Potter M: Housewife	Infant teacher; munitions worker; party worker; journalist	SDP; BSP; WEA; sec., Mansfield Labour College	a. 1 b. 2	1922 (d.1985, Peking) DO; National Women's Organiser; Comintern Congress delegate; RILU Women's Congress delegate; <i>Daily Worker</i> correspondent, 1934–55	Alfred Henry Smith (1888–1975) Newbury, Berkshire English House painter 1916, separated early 1930s CPGB
Douglas Frank 'Dave' <b>SPRINGHALL</b> 1901 Hendon, London English 29	Working-class F: Theatre attendant M: Domestic servant; housewife	Navy, 1916–20 (dismissed for subversion); builder's labourer; party worker; journalist	Worked with WSF, BSP	a. 1 b. 3	1920 (d.1953, Moscow) YCL Executive; NUWCM organiser; ILS, 1929–31; DO; IB Commissar; <i>Daily Worker</i> editor (1938–39); Comintern rep., 1939; NO; armed forces work.	1.Minnie Eugenia Sternberg (née Bowles) (1903–1997) Southwark, London English Shorthand typist Cohabited 1937–1941 CPGB

					Convicted of spying, 1943, expelled.	2. Janet Doris Watson (née Barton) (1910–1995) Orange, New South Wales Designer, private means Cohabited from 1941 CPGB
Walter Thomas Leo ‘Tappy’ <b>TAPSELL</b> 1904 Dover, Kent English 26	Working-class F: Boilermaker; regular soldier; clerk; office caretaker M: Housewife	Clerk; party worker		a. 2 b. 0	1921 (d.1938, Spain) London organiser, YCL; secretary, YCL; KIM and Comintern Congress delegate; ILS, 1930–31; manager, <i>Daily Worker</i> ; IB Commissar	Esther Lachinsky (1906–1959) Bethnal Green, London English, Russian parents F: Tailor’s presser m. by 1930 CPGB
Ellen ‘Nellie’ <b>USHER</b> (néé Berry or Berrey) 1882 London English 48	Working-class F: Tailor’s cutter M: Widow; cook; cleaner	Bus conductor; upholstery worker Amalgamated Union of Upholsterers; NUFTO	LP; NCLC student	a. 1 b. 0	1928 (d.1969) Secretary, Women’s Shop Stewards’ Movement; Chair, Westminster CPGB	Frank Henry Usher (1892–1914) Islington, London English House porter; regular soldier m.1914
Felix <b>WALSH</b> 1890 Keighley, Yorks. English 40	Working-class F: Iron moulder’s labourer M: Housewife	Warp twister; Army, 1915–1919 Yorkshire Warp and Twisters Society (President, 1947)		a. 1 b. 0	1921? (d.1957) Communist candidate, Bradford council elections; Secretary, Central Rank and File Strike Committee, 1930	Emily Gaskell (née Walker) (1889–?) Keighley, Yorks. English Weaver F: Iron moulder m.1915
Harry <b>WEBB</b> 1892 Ashton under Lyne, Lancs.	Working-class F: Iron roller fitter	Cotton mill worker; party worker; general labourer steelworks	SLP; CUG	a. 1 b. 0	1920 (d.1962)	Annie Berry (1893–1975) Ashton Under Lune, Lancs.



English 38	M: Housewife				NO; Supplementary Department; DO	English Cotton mill winder F: Collier m.1924
Lily <b>WEBB</b> 1897 Ashton-under- Lyne, Lancs. English 33	Working-class F: Iron roller fitter M: Housewife	Cotton mill worker; party worker; Comintern worker; woollen mill worker; farmer Cotton workers' union; Textile Workers' Union; TGWU	St John's Social Crusade (Church of England)	a. 1 b. 0	1921 (d.1959) NUWCM National Women's Organiser; delegate to 2 <sup>nd</sup> Conference of Working and Peasant Women, Moscow, 1927; Comintern Women's Section; temporary DO; joint leader National Women's Hunger March, 1932	Morris (or Maurice) Fagelzaan, later Fagelson, later Ferguson (1899–1957) Hull English, parents Russian Hairdresser; party worker; bus conductor; farmer F: Glazier m.1924 CPGB
Sarah <b>WESKER</b> 1903 Ekaterinoslav, Russia Russian 27	Working-class F: Tailor M: Housewife Russian Jewish immigrants	Clothing worker; Comintern worker; Union official ULTTU; UCWU; NUTGW		a. 1 b. 0	1929 (d.1971) ILS (part-time), 1931–32)	Never married. Relationship with Myer 'Mick' Mindel (1909–1994) London English, son of Lithuanian immigrants Tailor; union official F: Cardboard box maker CPGB
Harold 'Hal' <b>WILDE</b> 1900 Crewe, Cheshire English 30	Working-class F: Railway clerk M: Uncertificated teacher	Engineer; Army, 1917–19; Scandinavia and Germany, 1924– 26; Ruskin College; party worker; Comintern worker AEU	ILP/LP	a. 1 b. 0	1925 (d.1978) Comintern, 1930–31; ILS (part-time), 1930–31; DO	Lily Wakefield (1898–1973) Crewe, Cheshire English Shop assistant F: Railway coach builder m.1925

Bertie 'Bert' <b>WILLIAMS</b> 1895 Abertillery, Monmouthshire Welsh 35	Working-class F: Miner	Miner; Army, 1917– 18; CLC student; Comintern worker; party worker SWMF; UMS	ILP/LP	a. 1  b. 0	1922 (d.1958) ILS, 1930–31; Agit-prop Department; IB Commissar; DO	Nancy G. Pritchard (1899–1968) Newport, Monmouthshire Welsh F: Railway goods checker m.1925 CPGB
Garfield <b>WILLIAMS</b> 1901 Bedwas, Monmouthshire Welsh 29	Working-class F: Underground haulier	Miner; party worker; farmer SWMF		a. 1  b. 0	Sec., South Wales MMM; Editor, <i>Bedwas Rebel</i> pit paper; DO	
Ernest <b>WOOLLEY</b> 1900 Openshaw, Manchester English 30	Working class F: Mechanic M: Housewife	Engineer; RAF, 1918–19; party worker; Comintern worker AEU	BSP	a. 2  b. 0	1920 Emigrated to Australia 1949 (d.1989) Manchester organiser, YCL; National factory groups organiser; DO; secretary, Workers' Legion/Workers' Defence Force; <i>Daily Worker</i> staff; Moscow correspondent, <i>Daily Worker</i> ; IB.	1. Emma Elizabeth Jansen (1905–1987) Berlin German; British by marriage Stenographer; Arcos employee; Comintern worker/courier m. Moscow 1927, Manchester 1928; divorced 1945. CPGB 2. Rosemary Hynard Windsor (1916–2008) Private secretary m.1945 CPGB

**Note:**

1. Harry Webb had previously served on the CC from January 1921 until October 1922.

**Abbreviations:** **AEU:** Amalgamated Engineering Union; **ASW:** Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers; **Arcos:** All-Russian Cooperative Society; **AWA:** Amalgamated Weavers' Association; **BISAKTA:** British Iron, Steel and Kindred Trades Association; **BSP:** British Socialist Party; **CC:** Central Committee; **CLC:** Central Labour College; **CLP:** Communist Labour Party; **[CO]:** Conscientious objector; **CP-BSTI:** Communist Party-British Section, Third International; **CPSA:** Communist Party of South Africa; **CSEU:** Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions; **CWC:** Clyde Workers' Committee; **CUG:** Communist Unity Group; **DMA:** Durham Miners' Association; **DO:** District Organizer; **DW EB:** *Daily Worker* Editorial Board; **EATSSNC:** Engineering and Allied Shop Stewards' National Council; **F:** Father; **FKCMA:** Fife, Kinross and Clackmannanshire Miners' Association; **FOSU:** Friends of the Soviet Union; **IB:** International Brigade; **ICWPA:** International Class War Prisoners Association; **ILD:** International Labour Defence; **ILP:** Independent Labour Party; **ILS:** International Lenin School; **IWW:** Industrial Workers of the World; **KIM:** Communist Youth International; **LP:** Labour Party; **LRD:** Labour Research Department; **M:** Mother; **MFGB:** Miners' Federation of Great Britain; **MM:** National Minority Movement; **MMM:** Miners' Minority Movement; **MRU:** Mineworkers' Reform Union; **NCF:** No Conscription Fellowship; **NCLC:** National Council of Labour Colleges; **NLWM:** National Left Wing Movement; **NO:** National Organizer; **NUC:** National Union of Clerks; **NUFTO:** National Union of Furniture Trade Operatives; **NUGMW:** National Union of General and Municipal Workers; **NUM:** National Union of Mineworkers; **NUR:** National Union of Railwaymen; **NSS&WCM:** National Shop Stewards and Workers' Committee Movement; **NUSMW:** National Union of Scottish Mine Workers; **NUT:** National Union of Teachers; **NUTGW:** National Union of Tailor and Garment Workers; **NUWCM:** National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement; **RILU:** Red International of Labour Unions; **ROP:** Russian Oil Products; **SDF:** Social Democratic Federation; **SDP:** Social Democratic Party; **SLC:** Scottish Labour College; **SLP:** Socialist Labour Party; **SPA:** Socialist Party of Australia; **SPGB:** Socialist Party of Great Britain; **SWMF:** South Wales Miners' Federation; **SWSS:** South Wales Socialist Society; **TGWU:** Transport and General Workers' Union; **UCWU:** United Clothing Workers' Union; **ULTTU:** United Ladies Tailors' Trade Union; **UMS:** United Mineworkers of Scotland; **USF:** University Socialist Federation; **WEA:** Workers' Educational Association; **WIR:** Workers' International Relief; **WSF:** Workers' Socialist Federation; **WSPU:** Women's Social and Political Union **WTM:** Workers' Theatre Movement; **YCL:** Young Communist League

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Trotsky (1975, p. 19) observed of the Comintern blueprint: ‘We reject the apocalyptic presentation of the “third” period as the final one: how many periods there will be before the victory of the proletariat is a question of the relation of forces and the changes in the situation ... We reject the very essence of this strategic schematism with its numbered periods; there is no abstract tactic established in advance for the “second” and the “third” periods’.

<sup>2</sup> The CPGB’s 1929 manifesto was entitled *Class Against Class* – see [CPGB: Class Against Class \(1929\) \(marxists.org\)](#).

<sup>3</sup> Trotsky (1975) remains the classic exposition of the critique.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Isolating itself more and more from the working class, the Communist Party counterposed to the trade unions which embraced millions of workers its own trade union organisations which were highly obedient to the leadership of the Comintern but separated by an abyss from the working class. No better favour could be done for the trade union bureaucracy. Had it been within its power to award the Order of the Garter, it should have so decorated all the leaders of the Comintern’ (Trotsky, 1972, p. 75).

<sup>5</sup> CPGB endorsement of the policies that facilitated the German disaster is rarely observed. Pollitt (*Daily Worker* [DW] 8 April 1930) parroted Stalin: ‘Social fascism has reached its highest stage in Germany’ and commended the KPD. Dutt dismissed Trotsky’s call for a united front to halt Hitler: ‘No more disruptive and counter-revolutionary lead could possibly have been given’ (DW, 26 May 1932).

<sup>6</sup> The CC was usually, as in January 1929 and November 1932, made up of 30 representatives. The committees elected in 1927 and 1935 were the same size but the December 1929 Congress elected a 36-strong body.

<sup>7</sup> Communist Party Archive, Labour History Archive and Study Centre, Manchester (hereafter CPA), CP/IND/DUTT.28/09, Circular to Locals and District Committees, 18 November 1929.

<sup>8</sup> CPA, CI30, Comintern Political Secretariat to CPGB Congress, 28 November 1929.

<sup>9</sup> Information is completely lacking on ‘Miss Philipson’ and J. Parcell and they have been largely ignored in our calculations. A ‘J. Parcell, Swansea’ contributed to the *Daily Worker* Fighting Fund in 1931 (DW, 25 February 1931) and a ‘Comrade Ivor Parcell’ addressed a meeting in Swansea in 1930 (DW, 4 September 1930). The 1911 Census recorded a Parcell family of coal miners living in Swansea which included two sons, John and Enoch Ivor, but in the absence of corroborating information, we cannot conclude that this John Parcell was the CC representative. Branson (1985, p. 340) lists a ‘McLean’ as a member of the 1932 committee. A survey of the *Daily Worker*, 1932–1934, suggests Alexander McLean, a leading activist in the Cowlairston Railway Workshops cell in Glasgow, which was singled out as ‘an outstanding example of how to work correctly’ in a 1932 Congress resolution (DW, 1 December 1932), who secured 900 votes in municipal elections in 1933 (DW, 9 November 1933), as the most probable candidate and he has been included on this basis, although we been unable to ascertain further data. We were also unable to trace the ‘Y.’ Walsh whom Branson (1985, p. 340) lists as a member of the December 1929 CC. The initial Y. could be a mistake or a mistranscription from the notes James Klugmann made in the Moscow archives which formed the basis for Branson’s compilation. The lists of leaders and their pseudonyms, 1931–1932, in the Klugmann papers (CPA, CP/IND/KLUG/03/02) include two references to an F. Walsh. In all probability, this was Felix Walsh, a Yorkshire Communist active in the textile industry during the Third Period and we have included him in place of his elusive namesake.

<sup>10</sup> In March 1928, 16% of the CPGB members were women; the figure was 14.75% in October 1934 (Thorpe, 2000b, p. 784).

<sup>11</sup> For details of these earlier committees, see McIlroy & Campbell (2020a, 2021a).

<sup>12</sup> CPA, CENT/PERS/6/7, George Short biography.

<sup>13</sup> Russian State Archives of Socio-Political History (hereafter RGASPI), 495/198/1162, Jim Ancrum, 6 March 1932.

<sup>14</sup> National Archives, London (hereafter NA), KV2/1766, Joseph Reading Scott, Burnt History Sheet, 12 December 1928.

<sup>15</sup> RGASPI, 495/100/604, PB, 12 August 1929. Others co-opted, sometimes as candidate members, included Moody, a union rather than workplace militant, and Glading, who had been victimised in 1928 and was not re-elected to the December CC having gone to the ILS: RGASPI, 495/100/598, CC, 7–11 August 1929. This may reflect the party’s difficulty in identifying politically able workplace activists.

<sup>16</sup> J.V. Stalin, ‘On the death of Lenin’, 30 January 1924: [On The Death Of Lenin \(marxists.org\)](#).

<sup>17</sup> The reader is referred for fuller details of activists discussed in this and the following section to McIlroy & Campbell (2020a, 2020b, 2021a, 2021b).

<sup>18</sup> RGASPI, 495/198/14, Robert McLennan, 23 June 1933; McIlroy & Campbell (2002b, pp. 52, 63–64).

<sup>19</sup> NA, KV2/1766, Joseph Reading Scott.

<sup>20</sup> RGASPI, 495/198/71, Leo McGree, 16 January 1932; Kelly et al. (1993).

- <sup>21</sup> NA, KV2/596, George Allison.
- <sup>22</sup> RGASPI, 495/198/1397, Jimmy Shields, 23 February 1932; NA, KV2/2801, James Shields, Report, 12 February 1947.
- <sup>23</sup> RGASPI, 495/198/106, Bob McIlhone, 22 October 1933.
- <sup>24</sup> NA, KV2/1768, Idris Cox.
- <sup>25</sup> NA, KV2/1993, Edward Frank Bramley.
- <sup>26</sup> NA, KV2/1595, 1596, Douglas Frank Springhall.
- <sup>27</sup> We were unable to ascertain further details of Miss Philipson, listed for the December 1929 CC: see note 9, above.
- <sup>28</sup> Fuller information concerning activists discussed in this section can be found in McIlroy & Campbell (2022b).
- <sup>29</sup> RGASPI, 495/198/1191, Alex Hermon, 26 May 1934, 17 March 1935; 495/100/685, Pollitt to Campbell, 9 September 1930.
- <sup>30</sup> RGASPI, 495/198/863, Walter Tapsell, 18 September 1930; 495/198/1196, Walter Tapsell, n.d. [1932?]; NA, KV2/1192, Walter Thomas Leo Tapsell; Hopkins (1998, pp. 54, 161, 205, 219–220, 231, 422).
- <sup>31</sup> RGASPI, 495/198/406, Frank Bright, n.d. [1930]; 495/198/1106, Frank Bright, 7 August 1934; Frow & Frow (1975).
- <sup>32</sup> RGASPI, 495/198/1162, Jim Ancrum, n.d. [1931/1932?]; Watson (2018).
- <sup>33</sup> RGASPI, 495/198/857, Bert Williams, 22 October 1929.
- <sup>34</sup> RGASPI, 495/198/1380, James Garnett, 1 September 1930; Working Class Movement Library, Salford (hereafter WCML), Biographical files: James Garnett.
- <sup>35</sup> RGASPI, 495/198/1190, Charles Hoyle, n.d. [1931]; WCML, Biographical files: Charles Hoyle.
- <sup>36</sup> RGASPI, 495/198/115, George Short, 1 September 1930; CPA, CP/CENT/PERS/6/7, George Short, 1953.
- <sup>37</sup> RGASPI, 495/198/115, Tom Roberts, 27 February 1935; *Staffordshire Sentinel*, 6 October, 2 November 1923, 23 February 1927; *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 11 July 1925; *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 19 September 1942.
- <sup>38</sup> RGASPI, 495/198/1388, Trevor Robinson, 27 December 1931.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>40</sup> CPA, CP/CENT/WOMEN/3/2, Lily Webb, February–March 1957; Thorpe (2000a, p. 31); RGASPI, 495/100/23, Peter Vassiliev, Report on the Work in England, 1 December 1921; Frow & Frow (n.d., p. 72).
- <sup>41</sup> RGASPI, 495/198/1198. Hal Wilde, 1 January 1932; Murphy (1941, pp. 305–306). The 1939 Register of England and Wales records him working in Derby as an aero engine inspector.
- <sup>42</sup> *DW*, 28 January, 1, 20 August, 10 November, 1 December 1930, 15 January, 18 March, 1931, 13, 28 April 1932; Francis & Smith (1980, p. 154); CPA, CP/IND/MISC/2/3, Idris Cox, ‘Story of a Welsh rebel’, unpublished typescript, p.17; information from Hywel Francis.
- <sup>43</sup> *Sheffield Independent*, 7 February, 21 June 1929; *DW*, 31 January, 11 March, 12, 28 April 31 May 1930; *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 25 April 1930; NA, KV2/1768, Idris Cox, C. Lynch, Moscow, to A. Massie, December 1930; Lynch (1932). In March 1933, ‘Lynch (YCL)’ was billed to speak alongside Pollitt at a Marx anniversary rally (*DW*, 11 March 1933).
- <sup>44</sup> Clegg (1964, pp. 120–124); NA, KV2/2792, Charles John Moody, Special Branch Report, 19 May 1932.
- <sup>45</sup> NA, KV2/2794, Charles John Moody, Report by W.J. Skardon, 15 April 1950.
- <sup>46</sup> RGASPI, 495/198/1270, Ernest Woolley, 9 April 1932; NA, KV2/2685, Ernest Woolley, Special Branch Report, 6 December 1945, Director General to SLO Australia, 12 July 1950; Alexander (1982, p. 221). It has been suggested that Woolley and his wife, Emma, attended the ILS, 1935–1937. While it is possible that they had some association with the school during their time in Moscow, de-crypted radio messages between the CPGB and the Comintern make clear that Ernie was there to work as *Daily Worker* correspondent, Emma was at the disposal of the International (West, 2005, p. 94).

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**[Insert Appendices 1–3 here. Left align columns]**