

## **Introduction: a question of leadership**

Throughout the 1920s, the prospects of building the mass revolutionary party rooted in the British working class that the Comintern prescribed, and its British section (CPGB) promoted, were restricted by an unfavourable balance of forces. Capital held the whip hand. The decade saw high unemployment; erosion of trade union membership; decline in trade union workplace organization and rank-and-file militancy; reverses in strikes; and widespread victimization of activists. The radicalization which had developed from 1910 and was reflected in struggles over the welfare state, trade union legislation, women's suffrage and Ireland, subsided. Adversity and divisions infected political psychology: defeat and retreat motivated caution, even demoralization, among protagonists who had come to the fore during the phase of militancy. Against the background of Britain's past as the dominant imperialist power, a hostile state, the resonance of reformism and the marginality of Marxism, many socialists searched for more immediately realisable solutions and turned towards the established institutions of the labour movement, the union leaders and the Labour Party (August, 2007, pp. 165–202; Cronin, 1984, pp. 19–34; Hinton and Hyman, 1975; Ives, 2017; Laybourn, 1998; Mates, 2016; McKibbin, 1991; Savage & Miles, 1994).

It is a commonplace of sociology, far from peculiar to Marxism, that conditions do not determine outcomes. The response of organizations such as the infant Communist Party, how leaders at all levels react to economic and political constraint, can make a difference. Their abilities, preparedness, the choices they make, the policies they adopt, may ameliorate or exacerbate the impact of threats from a recalcitrant environment. The quality of leadership may be a significant factor. By mobilizing members behind countervailing strategies, exploiting opportunities and discarding solutions which intensify difficulties, key players may facilitate survival and stimulate resurgence (see, for example, Anderson, 1980; Cohen, 1978; Plekhanov, 1898/1940).

The Bolsheviks' appreciation of leadership was second to none. Adapting the ideas of the Karl Kautsky-led centre current of the German Social Democracy to Russia, Lenin insisted that any party capable of guiding workers must consist of experienced, accomplished leaders. All members must aspire to expertise in the science and art of revolution; Bolsheviks must become professionals as opposed to amateurs, craftsmen as opposed to 'do-it-yourself' dabblers or 'weekend Communists'. He conceived the party as a collective of disciplined agents, adepts in Marxist theory and practice who would understand and connect with workers, secure their confidence and trigger their enlightenment and emancipation (Krausz, 2015, pp. 111–143; Le Blanc, 1990, pp. 39–101; Lenin, 1902/2005; Lih, 2005; Rabinowicz, 1976/2017). Communist leaders must not only inspire but dispassionately assess the conjuncture and workers' consciousness, manoeuvre, compromise, 'resort to stratagems, artifices, illegal methods, evasions and subterfuge' in order to penetrate and hegemonize the labour movement (Lenin, 1920/1970, pp. 46–47). An organization of tough-minded leaders would be coordinated by an authoritative central executive. A team of talents, the committee would ensure synergy, continuity and stability and take the initiative in developing programme, policy, strategy and its execution (Lih, 2005, for example, pp. 346–347, 410–415, 459–469, 519–521, 592–602).

This accent on leadership, which coupled centralism with accountability and rejection of the cults which would flourish from 1924, was carried over into the Comintern. However, the new International took as its prototype not pre-revolutionary varieties of Bolshevism, not the open, democratic party of 1905 or 1917, but the centralized *ruling* party entangled with the bureaucratically deformed Russian state which had developed between 1919 and 1921, a party recast in the crucible of crisis, civil war, capitalist encirclement, the Bolsheviks' loss of majority support and prohibition of political competitors. It differed significantly from the party which had directed the overthrow of the Tsar. Yet it was this military model

characterized by growing authoritarianism and diminishing democracy that the Comintern urged on its national sections (Lih, 2013; McIlroy & Campbell, 2019b). Its '21 Conditions' for admission declared that affiliates could only foster revolution if 'organized in the most centralized way possible and governed by iron discipline and if its central leadership, sustained by the confidence of the party membership, is strong, authoritative and endowed with the fullest powers' (<https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/2nd-congress/ch07.htm>).

Inadequately understood initially, this philosophy was ultimately unproblematically accepted by the British party. If the CPGB was to act as 'the *leading* party of the working class'<sup>1</sup> (original emphasis), it required: 'A central guiding and directing body invested with complete authority over the Party ... Instructions of the Party Executive must be treated as absolutely binding upon the individual member' (CPGB, 1924, pp. 46, 45). In theory, centralized decision-making would not derogate from building a party of leaders: 'the members of the Party must equip themselves to be *leaders* of the working class by taking part in and leading the workers, in their struggle for emancipation' (original emphasis) (CPGB, 1926, p. 14). Finally, the revolution would be international, and the British leadership was itself subordinate to a higher authority, the increasingly *commandiste* Comintern, for: 'the Communist Party is not like other parties of the Labour and Socialist Internationals a self-determining entity but is really a section of a single party' (CPGB, 1924, p. 50).

The aspiration 'every member a leader' was incompletely realised in either Russia or Britain. In practice, members exhibited varying degrees of commitment and activity; leaders became differentiated from the membership at large, exercised day-to-day control of resources, developed occupational interests and expertise, and dispensed patronage. National and regional elites came to constitute the backbone of parties marked by significant membership turnover and differentially developed recruits. This spine became known as 'the

cadre'. Chiming with the military model, it was a French word denoting the permanent establishment or complement of officers of a regiment (for discussion see Klehr, 1978, pp. 6–9; Chase & Getty, 1978). Its usage radiated out from the Red Army and was applied to leading personnel across all sectors of the Soviet state and society. Although the term has been used generally by scholars, it does not appear to have been commonly employed by British Communists in the 1920s, although party members were described as 'a corps of officers' and the Comintern 'a general staff' (*Workers Weekly*, 12 December 1924, 25 June 1926). 'Cadre' featured more frequently in CPGB parlance from the turn of the decade.<sup>2</sup> It had entered Comintern discourse earlier but became more popular in the Soviet Union from the early 1930s. As the fusion of party and state was consummated, 'cadre' was used to describe the elite troops of Soviet progress: military, technical, scientific and cultural experts employed by the state and committed to constructing Stalinism – as well as 'shock workers' and party personnel (Fitzpatrick, 1979). It was increasingly applied to leading elements in Comintern affiliates, themselves steeled in service to the Soviet state, particularly after Stalin's address to newly qualified military personnel in 1935 with its often-quoted maxim, 'Cadres decide everything', and the subsequent establishment of Cadre departments in national parties (Hyde, 1950/1952, pp. 89–91; McIlroy & Campbell, 2020a, p. 42).

In the CPGB, 'cadres' would come to denote 'those trained and ready to do anything, anywhere, for Communism ... To be a "steel-hardened cadre" became the aim of every good Party member' (Hyde, 1950/1952, p. 90). Identification of centralized leadership and 'professional revolutionaries' with full-time functionaries had developed, encouraged by the Comintern, in the national sections, including the CPGB, from the early 1920s. The 1922 Committee on Reorganisation envisaged EC members would supervise departments at headquarters; the 1923 Comintern commission in Moscow agreed a Political Bureau (PB) based on full-time representatives working at the centre (Macfarlane, 1966, pp. 84–85;

Thorpe, 2000a, p. 67).<sup>3</sup> Leadership was not confined to the EC but power gravitated towards the top echelons of the party. The extent to which these trends strengthened internal distinctions, counterposed leaders to members, militated against the ambition of ‘a party of leaders’ and contributed to the growth of hierarchy and bureaucracy in the national parties before Stalin’s benediction of such trends, requires further investigation (Fitzpatrick, 1979; van Ree, 2002, pp. 136–140).

The importance of their collective central leadership in understanding Communist parties should require little further emphasis. It provided cohesion and coordination: ‘as the organizing agent of the party it was crucial to democratic centralist regimes. It constituted a central collective actor imparting to Communism much of its drive and influence, mobilizing members to execute policy and functioning as director, educator and interlocutor between rank-and-file Communists and the Comintern’ (McIlroy & Campbell, 2019a, p. 177). Nevertheless, research into its personnel remains sparse. Investigation certainly poses methodological problems but, as Harvey Klehr observed (1978, pp. 10–11), study of ‘the central guiding directing body’ of the party, its executive (EC), which included national and regional leaders, ‘can provide a fairly clear picture of the party cadre and bypass the problems of sample construction’.<sup>4</sup> Earlier work filled a gap in the historiography by presenting a prosopographical portrait of the CPGB EC, taken as broadly representative, though not exhaustive, of the party leadership during ‘the long foundation period’ from 1920 to 1923 (for brief discussion of prosopography see McIlroy & Campbell, 2019a, pp. 175–180, 2020a, p. 43). It surveyed the background and characteristics of 47 of 48 EC members and provided life histories of the 33 representatives who never served subsequently. It demonstrated, *inter alia*, high turnover, incipient factionalism, and failure to develop a Bolshevik-style cadre during the party’s initial years (McIlroy & Campbell, 2020b).

The present paper, the first of two linked articles which take the story further, analyses the composition of the leadership between 1923 and the onset of the disruptive, ultra-left Third Period – a watershed in Communist history – in 1928. Together, the two articles examine the five committees elected during this period and discuss the 39 leaders who sat on them. They take a prosopographical approach which combines statistical analysis of the origins, background, age, occupation, education and previous and subsequent affiliations of EC members with mini-biographies of this group of leading Communists. The present essay provides a statistical survey of the 39 leaders before proceeding to focus on the 20 representatives who appeared on three or fewer of the five committees (see **Tables 1-5**). We have divided this latter cohort into sub-groups which we explore in turn: those representatives who never figured on the EC after 1928 and left the party at various points; those who never served on future committees beyond our period but remained loyal CPGB members; and finally, ‘the coming men’ who reached the top in the mid-1920s but in contrast with the first two categories figured frequently on the EC *after* 1928.

The second paper will profile the 19 Communists who featured on four or five committees between 1923 and 1928 (McIlroy & Campbell, 2021). We have designated this contingent, elected to 80% or 100% of the committees which brought to the leadership the element of stability the Bolsheviks valued, as the ‘core’ of the cohort. The division is intended to provide an organizing device and a rough gauge of significance. Like all such distinctions, the boundary line requirement of four or five appearances for inclusion in the ‘core’ is somewhat arbitrary; numerically based, it does not indicate differences in power, influence or popularity, although these attributes are addressed to some extent in the accompanying histories of protagonists.

The years 1923–1929 were bookended by the excitements and ‘bedding down’ of the amalgamating organizations which characterized the party’s foundation, and by the Third

Period. CPGB members believed this to be an era of war and revolution with a radicalizing working class moving towards Communism; party leaders, however, confronted a host of problems. By 1923, the accent on the immediacy of capitalist crisis and proletarian insurgency had given way to acceptance that capitalism had temporarily stabilized, recognition of the fragility of Communism internationally, and overtures to rival working-class parties. The united front tactic required collaboration with competitors while undermining them – a tightrope difficult to negotiate. Lenin’s advice on Labour had arguably underestimated the degree to which Communists’ presence inside that party would encounter hostility. It took time for some Communists to accept it was imperative to operate inside the Labour Party and for others to grasp it would never be transformed into a socialist entity; the task was to recruit socialists within it to Communism. In the unions, the British Bureau of the Red International of Labour Unions’ (BBRILU) project to build links between militants at the base while simultaneously seeking to manoeuvre their organizations away from the Amsterdam International caused difficulties. If there was recognition the party needed to be remoulded on the Russian model, hesitancy remained as to how to organize in the labour movement and the degree to which the party should pressurize its bureaucracy – or act independently to outflank it (see, for example, Cronin, 1984; Hinton & Hyman, 1975; Macfarlane, 1966; Thorpe, 2000a, pp. 61–138).

Advances were registered industrially, via the National Minority Movement (MM), and politically, through engagement in the Labour Party via the National Left Wing Movement (NLWM) (Martin, 1969; Parker, 2018). Progress towards ‘Bolshevisation’ saw a more cohesive leadership, workplace cells, and an improved press spearheaded by the *Workers’ Weekly*. The CPGB’s reach remained restricted. Although it reacted resiliently to repression, particularly the incarceration of twelve leading Communists in 1925–1926, and performed impressively building resistance during the 1926 General Strike, it failed to seize

this opportunity to extend its industrial base or erode Labour's electoral hegemony (McIlroy, 2004a). From 1927, Communists faced enhanced hostility; the united front faltered in face of bans and proscriptions. Membership stood at 3,083 in January 1924, hovered around 5,000 through 1925, touched 12,000 in the exceptional circumstances of 1926 but fell back to 5,000 by the start of 1928 (Thorpe, 2000a, Appendix 2).

### **The CPGB leadership, 1923–1928: a statistical overview**

**Tables 1–5** list all CPGB leaders elected or co-opted to the EC in this period.<sup>5</sup> Information on these 39 Communists is summarised in the **Appendix**. Data is limited in one case but there are fuller entries on the remaining 38, who comprised 97% of the EC population between 1923 and 1928. Our sample is substantial and the data robust. It is drawn from individual biographies of leaders; biographical dictionaries; press reports; CPGB documents; personal files in the Comintern archives in Moscow; Security Service reports; and genealogical sources including census returns, birth, marriage and death registers, electoral rolls and the 1939 Register of England and Wales.

#### **[Insert Tables 1 – 5 here]**

The EC was predominantly composed of British-born Communists. Only Elsbury, who came to Yorkshire from Tsarist Russia as a boy, and Saklatvala, from Bombay, were born abroad. While 20 (51.3%) were English-born, over a third, 14 (35.9%) were Scottish, but only 3 (7.7%) Welsh. The English contingent also contained Dutt, son of a Bengali father and Swedish mother, Rothstein, whose parentage was Russian, and Newbold who had an Irish father. Among the Scots, MacManus came from an Irish family and Gallacher had Hibernian ancestry. Within national groupings, metropolitan London and Scotland's industrial heartland were dominant. Half of the English originated in the capital, with four from Yorkshire, three from Lancashire, as well as individuals from Birmingham, Reading



and Cambridge. Among the Scots, only Stewart, Joss, Ramsay and Wilson did not hail from the Clydeside conurbation: those who were born there ranged from Gallacher, from the engineering and textile town of Paisley, to Allan, raised in the mining centre of Blantyre, but most were concentrated in the shipbuilding and engineering trades of Glasgow. These figures broadly follow the distribution of party membership across Britain in 1924 when the two largest CPGB districts were London and Scotland: see **Table 6**.

**[Insert Table 6 here]**

Systematic data on religious background is lacking but available information suggests a mixture of denominations: Inkpin's and Tomkins' families were Church of England while Quelch and Arnot were married in it. MacManus's and Gallacher's parents were Catholics and both attended Catholic schools; Allan's mother was a Catholic as was Murphy's father – his mother was a Methodist. Crawfurd came from a Methodist family but her first husband was a minister in the Church of Scotland. Stewart married in a Congregational Church, Ramsay in the Church of Scotland. Hardy's family were Baptists and Horner initially worshipped in the Churches of Christ. Deacon and Newbold were Quakers. Elsbury and Rothstein were Jewish in origin, as was Kerrigan's wife. Saklatvala's family were Zoroastrians.

The group was overwhelmingly male and white. It contained only two women, Crawfurd and Turner – although females constituted 14–16% of CPGB membership between 1924 and May 1926 Thorpe (2000b, p. 784). There were two persons of colour, Dutt and Saklatvala; they made up 5% of the leadership, which probably exceeded the figure for the membership at large although there are no data on its ethnic origins. There was greater diversity in age. The mean age in 1925 was 36.4 years, running from Saklatvala and Watkins, both 51, to the 22-year-old Rust. The median was 35 years – somewhat older than during the foundation period 1920–1923: the mean age in 1920 was 35.9, the median 32.5 years.

However, maturation is to be expected given the 5-year gap between the index years (McIlroy & Campbell, 2020b, p. 428). Comparing the mean age of the 1923–28 group in 1920 with that of the foundation sample in that year, we find the former was only 31.4 years against 35.9, while the median was 30 years against 32.5. When the party was formed in 1920, the leadership of the mid-1920s was younger than the foundation cohort.

Six (15.4%) were born in the 1870s and reached maturity in the 1890s as Britain's 'second working class' of male, manual, factory employees, miners, transport workers, casual labourers and housewives took the stage. They witnessed the expansion of trade unionism, the development of independent political representation and the fragile growth of Marxism in a period of relative worker acquiescence. Twelve, almost a third, were born in the 1880s and became politically active in the first decade of the twentieth century as the new proletariat flexed its muscles. But the largest cohort, 18 (46.2%), was born in the 1890s and politically socialized in the era of radicalization from 1910, 'the Great Unrest', disillusion with the Labour Party, consolidation of socialist organizations, the spread of syndicalist ideas, and wartime militancy. The younger members of the sample were particularly affected by the struggle against conscription and the war – of nine conscientious objectors, six were born after 1890. The 16 activists who saw the light of day by 1897 experienced the impact of the Russian revolution in their twenties. Of the group as a whole, 34 (87.2%) were 20 years or more, some substantially more, in 1917.

Generational analysis may go beyond factors such as age and geographical location, and consider the role that shared mentalities, self-identification, a sense of belonging, recorded at the time or in retrospect, plays in how generations are made. 'The Great Unrest' and the 1914–1918 war were landmarks in developing the consciousness of members of a leadership cohort born across three different decades. The decisive event in their cohering, their common conviction that they were breaking with the past traditions of British socialism

and international Marxism and their collective coming to Communism, was the Russian revolution and the rethinking it prompted. The enthusiastic response to that epochal event, defence of its achievements and determination to emulate them, of diverse individuals from different generational sub-units who converged during 1920–1921 to create British Communism, constituted what was, above all else, ‘the generation of 1917’ (Edmunds & Turner, 2002; Foster, 2014, particularly xviii–xxiii, 6–7; Mannheim, 1952).

Sociologically, it was heterogeneous. The 1870s contingent, for example, encompassed the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) engineering shop steward, Clark, the middle-class suffragette and Independent Labour Party (ILP) member, Crawford, the autodidact compositor, Jackson, the bourgeois businessman, Saklatvala, the prohibitionist organizer, Stewart, and the syndicalist miner Watkins. With the exception of Newbold, those born in the 1880s, came from the skilled working class although their early politics varied. Those born in the next decade displayed greater difference. They included middle-class, university-educated intellectuals such as Arnot, Dutt and Rothstein, white-collar workers like Inkpin, Rust and Young, and a skilled proletarian nucleus drawn particularly from engineers and miners. It was the impact of 1917 that by 1920 had conjured a shared identity and political unity out of diversity in age, geography, social circumstance and political allegiance, and crystalized a consciousness of common purpose that for most, although not all, would be strengthened by subsequent collaboration with the Comintern and Soviet state.

Information on date of joining the CPGB is available for 38 EC members, although occasionally tentative: 25 (65.8%) enrolled in 1920 and 10 (26.3%) in 1921; 92% of our sample can therefore be categorised as foundation members in the broad sense. Their previous affiliations are listed in the **Appendix** and summarised in **Table 7**. The largest number, 15 (40.5%) of the 37 for whom this information is available, had been members of the ILP, reflecting both that party’s position as a gateway to the socialist movement for many

**[Insert Table 7 near here]**

as well as the presence of members of the ILP Left Wing which joined the CPGB in spring 1921. The second largest cluster came from the British Socialist Party (BSP) with 13 (35.1%) members. The smaller SLP followed with 10 (27.0%), although not all were associated with its breakaway Communist Unity Group (CUG), the constituent body at the CPGB's foundation conference. Former SLPers such as Murphy and Brain were not involved in the CUG and Allan only transferred his allegiance to the CPGB in 1923. The almost equal numbers of former BSP and SLP members on the executive in the mid-1920s supports arguments that emphasise the disproportionate numerical role former SLPers played in the CPGB (see McIlroy & Campbell, 2020c). The 14 previously involved with the National Shop Stewards and Workers' Committee Movement (NSS&WCM), and local workers' committees is notable – and if we add the four linked to the miners' reform committees, even allowing for some overlap, the total of 18 (48.6%) suggested the enhanced emphasis attached to creating an industrial presence in the party leadership.<sup>6</sup> Such concerns were also reflected in the presence of former adherents of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), notably Hardy in the United States and Wilson in Australia.

In harmony with the imperatives of Comintern ideology, the group was predominantly proletarian – 31 (79.5%) came from working-class families – although less so than the party as a whole. Inkpin claimed in 1923 that 90% of CPGB members were working-class and in 1925 that they were 'practically all proletarians'.<sup>7</sup> He was a self-interested witness but the February 1927 party census, to which over three-quarters of branches responded, indicated that 93.1% of the sample for whom occupation was recorded were manual workers. This is consistent with the Organisation Department statement in March 1928 that 95% of party comrades were working-class.<sup>8</sup> The occupations of EC members' fathers ranged across the

skilled and unskilled trades of nineteenth-century Britain. The former included ‘aristocratic’ jobs such as compositor, bookbinder, cabinet maker, bricklayer, carpenter, and mason, through the arguably lower status ranks of skilled manual labour such as plasterer, slater, blacksmith, and iron moulder as well as three miners. The unskilled included a hammerman, blacksmiths’ strikers, a dustman, a railway porter and variety of labourers. Two were white-collar workers: a clerk and proprietor of a bicycle shop. A little uncomfortably for those determined on a proletarian leadership, 20% of the committee members came from middle-class families, although for some this reflected upward social mobility: Arnot’s parents had begun as linen weavers, but his father became an editor, while Quelch’s father had commenced work as a labourer but also became a journalist and editor. Others were unambiguously middle class, drawn from its professional or commercial wings. Dutt’s father was a doctor, Rothstein’s a translator and diplomat; Crawford’s owned a bakery, Newbold’s was a corn merchant, Saklatvala’s a cloth merchant.

The class position of committee members broadly followed that of their parents – 29, almost three-quarters of the cohort, were originally manual workers. Of these, 18 (46.2% of the total) can be classified as being employed in skilled trades, 7 (17.9%) were unskilled, and 4 (10.3%) were miners. Among the skilled, engineers predominated and over a third (35.9%) of EC members had a background in metalworking. In contrast, in the party at large colliery workers were the preponderant group in the 1920s. In 1927, an exceptional year following the 1926 mining lockout, they constituted 75% of the membership whose occupations were listed in the party census; miners were recorded as the largest group in every district except London and Birmingham. Engineers represented only 7.1% of the census sample. Other skilled manual workers among the EC representatives included Jackson and Quelch, compositors, Stewart a carpenter, Tomkins a furniture maker and Elsbury a tailor. The less skilled included Turner, a textile worker, Hardy a seafarer, Brown a boot repairer, Robson an ironworks

labourer and Loeber a railway carriage cleaner. Other leaders pursued a variety of generally unskilled occupations: Wilson was at different times a miller, shopworker, clerk, seafarer, and dock labourer; Hardy worked on the land, in a shipyard, as a seafarer and a docker.

In the white-collar category, Inkpin and Rust were clerks and Campbell a shop assistant. These three (7.7%) reflected the presence of clerical workers in the CPGB as a whole: concentrated in London, they amounted to 4.8% of the 1927 census sample, slightly less than the leadership figure. There was a small group of intellectuals, defined by attendance at universities: Arnot, Deacon, Dutt, Newbold, and Rothstein – 12.8% of the cohort, a figure higher than that for the party as a whole: only 1.2% of the 1927 census sample were recorded as ‘professionals’ while 5% of members were classified as ‘intellectuals and professionals’ in 1928 (Thorpe, 2000b, p. 786). Elsbury, described as a ‘tailor and draper on his own account’ in the 1911 census, technically escaped from the working class while Deacon, who began his career as a clerk, for a time owned a shop. They reflected the even smaller minority of the party – 0.9% in the 1927 census – classified as self-employed. Finally, among the leaders, Saklatvala was a businessman, Crawford a middle-class widow of independent means.

Their union membership, another preoccupation of the leadership as the decade developed, reflected the group’s employment patterns. In the metal working trades, eight were in the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE)/Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU), two in the Amalgamated Society of Boilermakers, one each in the Associated Ironmoulders of Scotland, the National Union of Iron Founders and the British Iron and Steel and Kindred Trades Association. Four were active in the Scottish, Welsh and Yorkshire miners’ unions. There were single members of the London Society of Compositors, the Tailor and Garment Workers’ Union, the General and Municipal Workers, the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR), Amalgamated Association of Carpenters and Joiners, the National

Society of Painters, the National Amalgamated Furniture Trades (NAFTA) and the Amalgamated Union of Building Trades. Eight were members of the National Union of Clerks and two of the National Union of Journalists, which in part reflected those who went on to be employed in the party and satellite organizations. These figures were at variance with those for the party at large. In the admittedly exceptional year of 1927, Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) members accounted for 64.5% of the party's trade unionists, compared with 10% of EC representatives, whereas the 20% of the committee who were AEU members contrasted with a figure of 4% among the party's unionized workers.<sup>9</sup> Almost all the EC cohort were trade unionists, although white-collar organizations were well represented. In contrast, in the party as a whole, just under three-quarters of the members were recorded as being in unions in 1927 (and almost two-thirds of these were in the MFGB), reflecting the presence of housewives, the unemployed, professionals and self-employed in the total membership.

A number of representatives had experience as union officials or political organizers. Allan was elected general secretary of the Lanarkshire Miners' Union in 1927; Elsbury was an official of the Tailor and Garment Workers' Union; Hardy had served as IWW general secretary; Inkpin had been assistant secretary of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) and subsequently secretary of the BSP; Robson briefly worked as an ILP organiser in Middlesbrough; Stewart was an organiser for the Scottish Prohibition Party and an official of the Scottish Horse and Motormen's Union before the war; Tomkins began his career as a union functionary as London organizer of the National Amalgamated Furniture Trades in 1923; while Wilson was employed by the Socialist Party of Australia, the ILP and the National Society of Painters. In addition, Horner and Thomas had been checkweighmen, elected and paid by the colliers. Ten members of the EC, more than a quarter, had therefore been employed in some capacity in unions and political bodies outside the CPGB.

Most of the manual workers started school late and left early: Bell at 11, Allan and Gallacher at 12. Hardy followed his father on to the land at 12; at the same age, Stewart, who commenced his schooling at 7 and went half-time at 10, was articled as a ship's carpenter. Horner worked part-time from the age of 8 while Pollitt spent his last year at elementary school as a half-timer in a cotton mill before leaving at 13. Jackson, who started his education at 7, began work as a reader boy at 13 and a half. Campbell began employment as a grocer's assistant at 14, the same age that Hannington commenced his training as an engineer. Only five (12.8%) underwent higher education – see **Table 8** – and of these Newbold had left by 1924. Determined to learn and enlighten others later in life, many EC members were active,

**[Insert Table 8 near here]**

to one degree or another, in Independent Working Class Education (IWCE). Arnot, Bell, Clark, MacManus, Murphy and even Pollitt taught classes; Newbold was prominent in the movement. Allan, who had been a former full-time student at John Maclean's Scottish Labour College (SLC), conducted classes in Lanarkshire while Joss was the SLC's Ayrshire lecturer (Bell, 1941; Campbell, 2000, p. 201; MacDougall, 1981, p. 86). Jackson was employed full-time by the North East Labour College in 1919. Having taught classes in Marxist economics in Glasgow, Clark subsequently served on the executive of the National Council of Labour Colleges (NCLC). Journalists were well represented: Bell edited the SLP's *Socialist* in 1919, Campbell was editor of the *Worker*, the shop stewards' and subsequently BBRILU and MM paper, MacManus nominally edited the *Socialist* during the war, several worked on the CPGB press while Quelch was employed by the Building Trade Workers' union as a research officer.

The **Appendix** lists the spouses/partners of EC representatives, who were often collaborators and helpmates of the largely male leaders, yet whose contribution to Communism has been frequently overlooked. Joss was a lifelong bachelor; 22 married once,



12 married or sustained a long-term relationship twice, and Hardy wed once but cohabited with two other women. Three – Clark, Ferguson and Loeber – were single until after the end date of this paper. The group largely found partners from their own class. Of those from a middle-class background, Arnot married a doctor's daughter, then the daughter of teachers; Crawford's husbands were a minister and master blacksmith, Newbold married a teacher; Rothstein's father-in-law was a Russian bourgeois. In contrast, Saklatvala wed a waitress. Class endogamy was paralleled in the proletarian majority. Exceptions were Jackson's first wife, daughter of a master mariner, and Marjorie Pollitt, illegitimate child of a choirmaster whose foster-mother was the daughter of a master baker. MacManus's wife, Hettie Wheeldon, a schoolteacher, came from an intermediate background; her father was a train driver who became a commercial traveller.

The group of wives was more ethnically diverse than the EC representatives themselves. Salme Dutt was Estonian; Rebecca Elsbury and Rose Kerrigan came from Jewish families in the Russian empire; the parents of Rosa Shar, Glading's second partner, were Russian, as were Julia Inkpin's, while Robson's first wife was born in Tsarist Poland. Rothstein's spouse, Edith Lunn, was Russian, Rust's second wife, Tamara Kravetz, a Georgian. Young's first wife was the daughter of Russian immigrants. A substantial majority, 35 (71.4%), appear to have been CPGB members and a number of EC members met partners through party activities. Bruley categorized party women as either 'cadres', involved in mainstream activities, or 'supporters' focused on home and family (Bruley, 1986, pp. 122–123). Applying these designations to committee members' spouses, the 'cadres' included Olive Arnot, Phyllis Bell, Isabel Brown, Paddy Ayriss, Lydia Jackson, Eirene Robson, Edith Rothstein and Tamara Rust. At least six of these produced no offspring; Isabel Brown had one child but also had an abortion in Moscow (Linehan, 2007, p. 80). There was frequent transition from 'cadres' to 'supporters' once children arrived: Marjorie Pollitt, with two

offspring, and Rosa Shar, who bore Glading a child in 1937, were ‘cadres’ who became ‘supporters.’ It is noteworthy that six of these eight ‘cadres’ were ‘second wives’. The proportion of EC representatives who went on to a second marriage or a long-term relationship – 38.9% – stands out. In the case of Crawford and Jackson, their first spouse died before a second marriage. ‘Irregular relationships’ were more common, with a cohabitee often described as a ‘wife’ and taking the man’s name, as with Bell and Glading (in Rosa’s case by deed poll) and for a time Rust and Robson.

The **Appendix** also lists information on the additional roles committee members occupied at some point in their party careers. At least 26 of the group served in such capacities as chair, vice-chair, secretary, national or district organizers or in a department at the CPGB’s King Street headquarters. At different times, six represented the party at the Comintern while Allan and Watkins fulfilled a similar brief at RILU; 12 of the group worked for the MM or BBRILU; two for the National Unemployed Workers’ Committee Movement (NUWCM); four edited party publications. In personnel terms, the EC overlapped with the apparatus; dual functions provided integration, employment and income for committee members. Remuneration and its regularity was perceived as important by representatives who sometimes lamented its insecure nature, dependent as it was on Moscow largesse. After the cornucopia of the CPGB’s first two years, the purse strings tightened. In the wake of the 1922 report on re-organization, the payroll was pruned. At the beginning of our period, Comintern subsidies declined and there was pressure on salaries, although, consonant with enhanced discretion, information is sparse in the documents and vestigial in the literature (Thorpe, 2000a, pp. 50–51, 65–66).

Nonetheless, it is clear that moves in the direction of a full-time leadership in the aftermath of the Comintern’s 1923 English Commission stalled through lack of funds.<sup>10</sup> On surviving evidence, projected salaries for 1924 covered only Bell (£260), Inkpin (£260),

MacManus (£186) and Pollitt (£186).<sup>11</sup> This provides an incomplete picture. Dutt, for example, received a salary as editor of the *Workers' Weekly* and in January 1924 RILU authorised payments of £6 5s per week respectively for the president and secretary of its British section (Home Office, 1926, p. 55). As subsidies stabilized by mid-decade, payments appear to have covered national and district officers and varied between £3 and £5 per week, with the latter a benchmark for national functionaries. In the districts, wages were nearer the £3 figure with local members contributing, but there was also a range of *ad hoc* payments and allowances. For example, CPGB organizers in the constituencies received £3 per week and party speakers £3 10s, during the 1924 general election campaign (Home Office, 1926, p. 58). Horner received a weekly wage of £3 10s or £4 as an official of the MM between 1927 and 1931, but payments ceased between February and August 1931 when he was 'in disfavour'.<sup>12</sup> Some EC members also benefitted from employment in 'the Soviet institutions' notably Russian Oil Products (ROP).<sup>13</sup> At least five (Brain, Glading, Quelch, Ramsay and Wilson) worked there at some point. Glading was reportedly employed in 1932 at the All-Russian Cooperative Society (Arcos); Quelch also worked at the Soviet-owned Centrosoyus, and Rothstein for a variety of Russian agencies.<sup>14</sup>

The **Appendix** demonstrates that wives and partners were also on the payroll, sometimes generating a second family income. Some went on to play leading roles; Tamara Rust became National Women's Organizer, Olive Arnot, secretary of the League against Imperialism, Isabel Brown, secretary of the Committee for the Relief of the Victims of German Fascism; several performed more menial jobs, such as Young's first wife, a typist in the NUWCM. Others worked for the Comintern, such as Phyllis Bell, or RILU – Ayriss worked alongside Hardy for the International Seafarers and Harbour Workers in Berlin. Some were employed at Russian institutions in clerical positions, such as Rothstein's wife, Edith Lunn, a senior clerk in the Arcos electrical department. Relatives were sporadically engaged.

Campbell's son, William, was taken on as a messenger at Arcos, then worked at the Soviet Consulate and ROP before he emigrated to Russia. Two of Horner's daughters and his brother were employed at the CPGB's bookshop; Bell's son, Oliver, briefly worked for the Young Communist League (YCL); Brain and Ramsay's sons and Hardy's daughter at ROP. One of Stewart's sons, William, worked there as well as at the Soviet embassy as a chauffeur; another son, Robert, became a clerk for a Russian company after he was blacklisted as a print union militant; his sister worked in the chemical section at Arcos.<sup>15</sup>

Between 1923 and 1928, trends in the leadership revealed continuity *and* discontinuity, consolidation *and* renewal. **Table 9** shows the percentage of newcomers to each EC fluctuated from 47.1% in 1923 – explained at least in part by the increase in the numbers appointed to the committee from nine in October 1922 to 17 by the end of 1923 – to

**[Insert Table 9 around here]**

16.7% in both 1925 and 1927. On average, these ECs contained over a quarter of newcomers. Only 13 of the total group (33.3%) had served on at least one committee before 1923 while two, Inkpin and MacManus, had been elected to all five ECs during the foundation period. Of the 39 who served between 1923 and 1928, 9 (23.1%) sat on only one committee, 7 (17.9%) on two, 4 (10.3%) on three, 6 (15.4%) on four and 13 (33.3%) on five. Therefore, over 40% of our group were elected to only one or two committees, while a 'core' of nearly 50% sat on all or almost all. The latter consisted of Bell, Campbell, Crawford, Dutt, Gallacher Hannington, Horner, Inkpin, Murphy, Pollitt, Rothstein, Rust and Stewart, who served on five, and Arnot, Brown, Ferguson, Jackson, MacManus and Turner, on four (see McIlroy & Campbell, 2021).

Looking beyond 1928, we can identify a smaller cluster who served on five or six of the six ECs elected between 1929 and 1938: Campbell, Dutt, Gallacher and Pollitt were on six, Arnot, Kerrigan and Rust on five. In contrast, 14 (35.9%) never sat on the committee

again after 1928. This figure includes MacManus, who died in 1927 and a number of leaders who had left the party by the end of the 1920s: Clark, Deacon Elsbury, Newbold, Tomkins, and Thomas. An additional six – Turner, Murphy, Young, Wilson, Quelch and Allan – quit the CPGB between the early 1930s and 1956. We should not overlook those who continued on the EC elected in January 1929 but were not re-elected to the committee at the end of that year as the Third Period purge intensified: Bell, Brown, Crawford, Glading, Inkpin, Jackson, Loeber, Turner, Rothstein, Stewart, Watkins, and Wilson – although Stewart returned to the committee in 1935. Of the original 39, only 14 (35.9%) survived on the EC into the 1930s.

### **The leadership of the CPGB, 1923–1928: EC transients, party drop-outs**

Twenty Communists (51.3%) appeared on three or fewer of the five executive committees elected between 1923 and 1928. We look first at the six members of this group who departed both the EC and CPGB before the end of the party's first decade. John Turner Walton Newbold (1888–1943) who owed his elevation principally to his election as Communist MP for Motherwell in November 1922, was the first to jump ship. Losing his seat in the 1923 general election, he resigned from the CPGB in 1924. His brief tenure on the EC was dominated by parliamentary duties and national speaking tours although he visited Russia and was taken up by the Comintern. Within the leadership, he eschewed alignment: he was sympathetic to Dutt's caucus but reluctant to dismiss the MacManus circle, although critical of Moscow's lavish expenditure, the salaries afforded functionaries, and the illusion that if the youthful organization acted like a big party it would automatically become one (McIlroy & Campbell, 2020b). A champion of IWCE who advocated socialist intellectuals prioritising empirical inquiry which transcended propaganda, this quirky, sometimes supercilious individualist was rarely comfortable with the party's direction of travel. 'Bolshevization', the breach with the Labour Colleges, the takeover of the Labour Research Department and the

launch of the MM which he perceived as divisive, combined with the workerism of contemporary Communists to crystallise the sense he had taken a wrong turning (Duncan, 1993, 2004a; Macintyre, 1980, pp. 100–102).

From Quaker roots, he was educated at Furness Grammar School, Buxton College and Manchester University. A shabbily attired, idiosyncratic six-footer with chronic catarrh and a streak of arrogance, he was prominent in the University Socialist Federation and emerged a talented investigative journalist and celebrated author of *How Europe Prepared for War*. His time in the ILP saw his marriage in 1915 to Marjorie Neilson, daughter of skilled working-class, Scottish Presbyterian parents. A schoolteacher who had studied at Glasgow University, she travelled via the No Conscription Fellowship to opposition to the war, ‘Hands Off Russia’ and the CPGB. A delegate to the Second Comintern Congress, prolonged illness precluded party activity thereafter and she died from tuberculosis in 1926 (Duncan, 2004b). Newbold, who had been a BSP member (Duncan 2004a) joined the CPGB with the ILP left in 1921 and attributed his conversion to the BSP émigré Ivan Maisky, the future Soviet ambassador (Morgan & Duncan, 1995, p. 37). Embodying the tensions between Russification and intellectual independence, he returned to the ILP and MacDonald’s Labour Party. His odyssey ended in membership of the Hyndman remnant SDF and support for the National Government. In 1936 he became a Catholic. Newbold died of tuberculosis in 1943 (Duncan, 2004a).

It was not only intellectuals who experienced disillusion as Russification unfolded and prospects of revolution dimmed. By mid-decade, the erstwhile SLPer and shop stewards’ leader, Tom Clark (1875–1943), had had enough. During the early years, he was on the payroll at King Street but after an unsuccessful spell as the CPGB’s Scottish Organizer, returned to the workshop. MI5 believed he was part of an espionage network orchestrated by the Soviet agent, Jacob Kirchenstein. Headed by former Clydeside shop steward, Jim Messer,

it allegedly enrolled engineering activists who provided Moscow with information on the manufacture of military equipment. The profuse reports provide no hard evidence for these suspicions, although it is plausible that Clark acted as a courier.<sup>16</sup> By 1923, he was a fixture of the CPGB's AEU fraction but became convinced that 'the Party was premature and ought to be liquidated',<sup>17</sup> views which aligned him with the critique of former Communist intellectuals. Whether aggrieved by exclusion from party employment or whether he considered identification with the CPGB a hindrance to advancement in the AEU, he castigated the 'immorality' of 'prominent party members' and the 'rigid and dictatorial Bureaucracy of the organization' which he compared unfavourably with the leadership of the trade unions.<sup>18</sup>

The party handled him cautiously: he could be a truculent character but as a member of the AEU Divisional Council, National Committee delegate and a candidate for executive office, he was a valuable asset. Attempts to integrate him by election to the CPGB EC elicited defiance: 'I will never hold any important office in the Party while it is run on the present lines.'<sup>19</sup> His refusal to allow Communist functionaries a say in his AEU election address was part of a protracted process which culminated in his resignation/expulsion by the end of 1928. It prefaced an anti-Communist stint on the AEU executive terminated by illness in 1938.<sup>20</sup> His career demonstrates, contrary to continuity narratives, that all the shop stewards' leaders did not pass unproblematically and enduringly into the Communist elite; it illustrates that proponents of De Leon's revolutionary syndicalism could evolve as ornaments of reformist trade unionism. Clark spent a decade and half in the SLP, where he was a pioneer of IWCE classes and the Clyde Workers' Committee (CWC); he served on the National Administrative Council (NAC) of the NSS&WCM (Bell, 1941, pp. 55, 68; Gallacher, 1936, p. 27; Hinton, 1973, pp. 107, 115, 124, 156, 129).

The only Jewish worker in our sample, Sam Elsbury (1880–1972), shared Clark’s pre-1920 union activism – although he came from the BSP; he too chafed against close control and was, likewise, out of the party by 1929. Born in Tsarist Russia, raised in Leeds, he was a militant tailor, blacklisted in the clothing industry and active in the SDF in Sheffield. Around 1909 he married Rebecca Moses, a Leeds-born clothing worker and daughter of Russian immigrants. He subsequently worked as a miner to avoid conscription before his arrest and flight to Ireland; he returned to London with false papers and became an organizer for the Tailor and Garment Workers’ Union where he was remembered as ‘a powerful orator ... a wonderful agitator ... at his best when he was required to lead some action requiring militancy; he was at his weakest when he was required to compromise’ (Lerner, 1961, pp. 102–103; see also Burke, 1983; *The Labour Who’s Who*, 1924, p. 52). Sam, his fellow BSP activist, Rebecca, and brother Ben, a self-employed tailor, pioneer syndicalist, IWW member, and in later life a Trotskyist (Bornstein & Richardson, 1986 pp, 263–264, n.14, 288; Goodway, n.d.), were one of British Communism’s founding families. He was elected to the MM executive and was a vocal presence at TUC Annual Congresses. Relations with party leaders were sometimes troubled – he resigned/was expelled, although he eventually reconciled with the party, in 1924–1925. But even before he attended the Comintern’s Sixth World Congress, he expressed enthusiasm for the Third Period politics which would prompt his downfall.<sup>21</sup>

The 1928 Rego strike provoked a split between the union’s London region and the more cautious national executive which culminated in his dismissal. The Political Bureau (PB), with his agreement, prepared a breakaway and, in March 1929, the United Clothing Workers’ Union (UCWU) was launched, with Elsbury as general secretary (Lerner, 1961, pp. 102–143). Impelled to restrain militancy to secure recognition from employers, he clashed with CPGB leaders determined to encourage strikes, showcase ‘the new line’ and control



‘their’ union. He was blamed for reverses in disputes mounted without the strike pay the party had promised and when the PB replaced him with Ernie Pountney, who had never worked in the industry, he resigned from the party, was turned out of his office, and branded ‘a social fascist’.<sup>22</sup> The episode ‘provides in miniature a condemnation of the whole of the Communist Party’s “new line” policy’ (Macfarlane, 1966, p. 260). For Elsbury, it ended three decades of revolutionary activism. Maintaining, despite Ben’s expulsion, that ‘the Third International was sound at heart’, he remained silent until popular frontism and the Moscow trials produced disillusion. By 1938 he was a Labour councillor and when Tom Bell’s *British Communist Party* attributed the UCWU debacle to ‘the opportunism and careerism of its leader Sam Elsbury’, he went to court. He was awarded £200 damages against Lawrence and Wishart for ‘a cruel libel’ and Bell’s book was withdrawn.<sup>23</sup>

The EC tenure and party membership of another union activist, Tom Thomas (1891–1967), did not survive the Third Period. A leading light in the Miners’ Unofficial Reform Committee in the Rhondda in 1919–1920, he attempted to broaden it into a Rhondda Workers’ Committee. He lived in Ynyshir in the Rhondda Fach and married the girl next door, Ada Radford, the daughter of a colliery hitcher, in 1911. Ten years later, he joined the CPGB, having participated in discussions with the Comintern representative, Mikhail Borodin, concerning the South Wales Miners’ Federation (SWMF) affiliating to RILU.<sup>24</sup> He was prominent in the unemployed movement as well as the Miners’ MM (MMM), attending the Third RILU Congress in Moscow in 1924 as a South Wales delegate, and acting as MMM regional secretary in 1926. He played a central role in organizing the Hunger March from South Wales in autumn 1927.<sup>25</sup> The following year, he stood as a party candidate in Ynyshir (*Western Mail*, 5 January 1928). It was his last bow as a Communist: an internal report from 1930 cryptically records ‘the expulsion of Tom Thomas who refused to take part in the corruption case of Maslin’.<sup>26</sup> The latter, a former chair of the Tylorstown miners’ lodge and

Communist councillor, alleged the deputy-clerk of the council had attempted to bribe him with a Christmas turkey; he was sued for slander, and ordered to pay £500 damages. Thomas presumably decided not to get involved and was expelled from the CPGB for his pains. Maslin established a rag and bone business, his cart pulled by a horse named 'Stalin' (Williams, 1996, pp. 177–179). Thomas joined the Labour Party and was soon a local councillor, attracting opprobrium from Communists for working as an 'investigating clerk' with the Unemployment Assistance Board, administering the Means Test (Williams, 1996, p. 176).

Alfred George Tomkins (1895–1975), an erstwhile emulator of the Bolsheviks, became a pillar of the British establishment. As a young man, he followed his father into the chairmaking trade and married the daughter of a leather worker. Involved in the shop stewards' movement, the Herald League and BSP, where, as secretary of the Kentish Town branch, he met Russian émigré activists linked to the Bolsheviks as well as his future wife, Ivy Louise Wilkinson, the minutes secretary (Hannington, 1967, p. 37). He became a friend of the furniture trades leader and future Communist supporter, Alex Gossip, and a member of the group around Alf Purcell in NAFTA who enrolled in the CPGB at its foundation. By 1924, Tomkins was NAFTA's London organizer and in 1925 and 1926 sat on the MM executive. His activity as a Communist climaxed around the General Strike; he was particularly active in the CPGB caucus at TUC Congresses (Macfarlane, 1966, p. 249; Martin, 1969, p. 21, 97; Reid, 1986). The Third Period saw his enthusiasm for an unsuccessful party which branded union leaders 'social fascists' evaporate. He dropped out in 1929, joined the Labour Party and began his climb to the top in NAFTA, where he became assistant general secretary in 1937 and general secretary in 1941. With the development of the Cold War, he emerged as an active anti-Communist, condemning unofficial strikes, and his stance hardened in the 1950s, although he continued to work harmoniously with CPGB

officials in the union. Tomkins was knighted shortly before his death (Reid, 1986, pp. 169–171).

George Leonard Deacon (1893–1968) sat only briefly on the EC in these years although he had been elected three times prior to 1923. A charter member of the party, he was born into the skilled working class, but more unusually came from a Quaker family and was a youthful Tory who graduated from clerical work to running his own business. He joined the Herald League and No Conscription Fellowship in London but resigned from the ILP because of its failure to wholeheartedly endorse the Russian revolution. As an ‘absolutist’ conscientious objector, he suffered great privations, went on hunger strike in Wormwood Scrubs, and spent the best part of two years in detention (*The Labour Who’s Who* (1924, p. 44; <https://livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk/lifestory/7654032>). He carried his dedication and capacity for self-sacrifice over into the CPGB, while maintaining his ‘outside interests’. With experience as a company secretary and study at University College, Reading, he lectured on finance and commerce and was an emerging *homme d’affaires* in the party, commended by Inkpin for trying to put the committee on a proper footing in 1921–1922.<sup>27</sup> He headed party training programmes and was engaged in Labour Party work, but his activity was restricted by the illness of his wife, Winifred Gaines, a former draper’s assistant. He attempted to withdraw from the EC but was refused permission. Whether these problems mingled with overwork and disillusionment is conjectural, but he pressed the issue and did not stand for the EC in 1925.<sup>28</sup> Before the end of the decade, he had quit the CPGB while remaining active in the Labour Party, standing as its candidate in Wimbledon in the 1950 general election (Berry, 2017).

### **The leadership of the CPGB, 1923–1928: transient leaders, longer-term members**

A second tranche of EC members consisted of four representatives whose time in the leadership was relatively brief but who remained party members into the 1930s and in one case the 1950s. Harry Young (1901–1995) who made a solitary appearance in this period representing the YCL, was the younger cousin of former EC member, Fred Peet. Young cut his teeth in the North London Herald League and BSP before becoming a leader of the Communist youth. Trotsky was his hero. He was removed from the payroll after the 1922 elections and spent much of the decade in Moscow working for the Communist Youth International, producing Comintern publications and learning Russian. He returned home in 1929 with a Russian wife – memorialized only as ‘E’ – who had been raised in the East End before re-emigrating to the Soviet Union. Determined to devote their energies to revolution, the couple decided on an abortion after ‘E’ became pregnant. The marriage collapsed when Young began an affair with ‘the pretty, feather-brained wife’ of another CPGB member; ‘E’, by now typing for the Unemployed Movement, left him for an admirer.<sup>29</sup> On his own account, he was denied party jobs and worked as a telephonist, at Collet’s bookshop and as a taxi driver, before quitting the CPGB in 1937. The Communists caught him early but he was not theirs for life. Two years later he joined the Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB), became a conscientious objector during the war and subsequently took a degree and became a schoolteacher. He was for many years a speaker at Hyde Park: ‘stout and red-faced, he had a remarkable gift of humour and could entertain audiences endlessly’ (Barltrop, 1975, p. 121; *Socialist Standard*, February 1996; Whitehead, 1992).

The Scot, John Richard ‘Jock’ Wilson (1884–1976), was a more substantial party figure although his strengths lay in organizing rather than Marxist analysis. He appeared on three committees during our period and finally on the January 1929 EC. Sometime member of the PB and Industrial Department, district organizer and delegate to Comintern conventions, Wilson was only narrowly defeated when standing against Inkpin for the

secretary's post in 1924.<sup>30</sup> It was his hesitancy in abandoning positions the party had defended since 1920 that ensured he fell prey to Third Period leftism. Part of the EC majority that initially questioned the emerging line, he was re-elected in January 1929 and even after the decisive 10<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the Comintern Executive (ECCI) he remained a PB member. As pressure mounted, he fumbled the litanies of recantation. More agile conformists concluded that, 'he does not recognise the mistakes he made in the past' in underestimating the social fascism of labour movement leaders. For some, his stabs at correction read more like defiance.<sup>31</sup> He was removed from the EC slate for the December CPGB Congress as 'a right opportunist' and dismissed from the payroll.<sup>32</sup> He resisted and, on the account of another sacked organizer, Ernie Cant, was 'threatening to pull the roof down' by publicising the CPGB's internal affairs. By 1931 he was employed by ROP. Despite subsequent dismissal, in 1934 he was again working at the company's Stoke depot.<sup>33</sup>

Born in Mull, Argyllshire, the son of a gamekeeper, Wilson moved to Glasgow around 1904 and was subsequently blacklisted for union activity. A member of the SDF, he emigrated to Australia, became secretary of the Socialist Party in Victoria, joined the IWW, opposed the war and served six months for incitement to hinder munitions production. He married May Ewart, a Manchester-born barmaid active in the IWW, in Long Bay gaol. The couple were deported to Britain in 1917 and he became an organizer for the ILP and Painters' Union, enrolling with May in the CPGB with the ILP left. The Wilsons returned to Australia at the end of the 1930s. They continued to support radical causes and defend the Soviet Union but had drifted out of the CPGB by the time they emigrated and never joined the Australian party (Bergman, 1995, pp. 98–100, 184–188; Thomas, 1970; *Workers' Weekly*, 11 January 1924). Reflecting on his long life, he deplored 'the foolish branding of people as social fascists ... It's happened so often; people who make honest criticism find themselves

accused of being enemies of the working class, traitors to the revolution, slanderers of the Soviet Union. It's verbal vomit' (Bergman, 1995, pp. 272–273; Thomas, 1970).

William Cornelius 'Bill' Loeber (1891–1965) was, like Wilson, sceptical about Third Period politics although he remained a Communist until World War II. He had less to lose having rejected party employment in favour of union activity. A railway carriage cleaner from Hornsey, North London, Loeber was an active trade unionist from 1912. Volunteering for military service in 1914, he became an acting sergeant in the Royal Irish Regiment. Serious wounds required the amputation of his right leg (Hansard, HC Deb., 31 May 1963, vol. 678, c.1751). Despite severe disability and constant pain, he was a thorn in the side of the leadership of the NUR for over a quarter of a century. From his base in the Wood Green branch, he became a fixture of the London District Council, a regular delegate to the NUR AGM and, from 1926, a frequent representative at the TUC Congress. In 1933, he stood unsuccessfully for the NUR general secretary's post (Martin, 1969, pp. 51–52). He was a mainstay of the MM and an animator of the Railwaymen's Vigilance Movement (RVM). Touring the country to build it, he recalled: 'I lived mainly on bread and cheese and pickled onions over the weekends and slept in queer places; upturned kitchen tables, on the floor and in railway carriages but was thoroughly satisfied with the results obtained' (Bagwell, 1963, pp. 522–523). The RVM provided Communists with a pathway into the rail unions and a springboard for electoral success in the NUR. In 1937, Loeber secured a seat on the union executive where he remained until his illness-plagued retirement began in 1956. Very much the militant trade unionist, he was also prominent in the Friends of the Soviet Union and when he quit the CPGB at the end of the 1930s it was over non-industrial questions (Martin, 1969, p. 52; McIlroy, 2016, pp. 353–355, 362). A long-time bachelor, he formed a partnership late in life with Katie Cant, estranged wife of Ernie Cant.<sup>34</sup>

Another MM activist, Thomas Eugene ‘Tom’ Quelch (1886–1954), took no part in the party leadership beyond the 1920s, although he remained a CPGB member into the 1950s. Born into the SDF as the son of one of the Federation’s most able leaders, Harry Quelch, the long-time editor of *Justice* who stood close to Hyndman, and the nephew of another, Alonzo, he showed signs of orthodoxy but during the war embraced the BSP opposition (Kendall, 1969, pp. 96, 172, 211, 232; Klugmann, 1969a, pp. 51, 282–283; Macfarlane, 1966, pp. 21, 60). He was active in the London Society of Compositors and in forming the Trade Union Rights Committee; as early as 1914, he pioneered the idea that all-inclusive trades councils could express workers’ social as well as economic needs, ‘develop working-class organization and pave the way for the rule of democracy’ (Clinton, 1977, pp. 91–93; Klugmann, 1969b, p. 338; Martin, 1969, pp. 6, 97, n.1, 98). As a member of the committee elected at the 1917 Leeds Convention on Russia, he pursued the dream of British soviets and broke with the BSP opposition’s ‘centrists’ around E. C. Fairchild.

Nonetheless, he continued to exhibit the casual xenophobia and worse that marked Hyndman and his circle and which their departure from the BSP had not entirely extinguished. In 1917 he protested plans to bring black South African workers to Britain to strengthen the war effort on racist grounds. Healthier tendencies revealed themselves and he suffered vigorous chastisement from his fellow ‘internationalist’ George Tchitcherine, a supporter of the Bolsheviks in the BSP’s Kentish Town branch (*Call*, 25 January, 1, 15, 27 February 1917). The incident does not appear to have dented Quelch’s reputation: he was a BSP delegate to the Second Comintern Congress and spent 14 months in Russia (Quelch, 1921). On his return, he continued to emphasise the role of trades councils as a site for Communist influence and champion them in the vain search for the British soviet (Clinton, 1977, p. 94). Arguably a better fit than J.T. Murphy’s workers’ committees for the proto-soviet mantle in that, as gatherings of union branches, they transcended the workplace, trades

councils also by-passed it; fundamentally, such theorizing remained abstract in the absence of insurgency.

Prominent in the BBRILU and MM – he served on the latter’s executive 1924–1928 – Quelch’s familiarity with Russia helped him find employment in the Soviet-owned Centrosoyus company which held accounts at the Moscow Narodny Bank, which were used to funnel cash from Russia to CPGB headquarters. A police investigation and Home Office Inquiry implicated Communist employees and Quelch was sacked (Home Office, 1928, p. 36). At ROP, his next port of call, he was suspected by MI5 of collecting funds from the docks, couriered from Moscow by officers of the Soviet oil fleet, and passing them to King Street. In the early 1930s he settled for a quieter life working for the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers. He quit the CPGB around 1950.<sup>35</sup>

### **The leadership of the CPGB, 1923–1928: short-term leaders, lifelong members**

A further group in our sample was made up of seven representatives whose EC incumbency was relatively brief but who, in contrast to the leading elements discussed in the previous two sections, remained in the party until the end of their lives. William Thomas ‘Bill’ Brain (1891–1961) had figured twice on the EC in the foundation years. The Birmingham-born son of a blacksmith, he was active in the Iron Founders’ Union and the NSS&WCM. He joined the CPGB from the SLP at the 1920 conference, worked for the BBRILU and MM and between 1924 and 1926, was the CPGB’s Midlands organizer. Thereafter, apart from spells at headquarters working in the Agit-Prop department, he was on the road organizing in Tyneside, where he spent the General Strike and much of 1927; Bradford; Cumberland, where he was adopted as parliamentary candidate for Barrow by a ‘Workers’ Electoral Committee’; and Northumberland – while ranging further afield to Manchester and Bristol.<sup>36</sup> Security Service intercepts suggest a hand-to-mouth existence: frequent requests to King



Street for money evoke today's gig economy. Pursued by creditors and marital problems, he sought out-of-work payments from his union and falsified claims for unemployment benefit.

Brain attended the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern but by 1929, he had lost his house in Birmingham, was ineligible for poor relief, could not return to the foundries because of poor health, and was carpentered for an inadequate response to Comintern criticism of CPGB leaders. He reflected: 'I'm right out of touch with Party affairs' and lamented that the December Party Congress was the first he would miss since 1920.<sup>37</sup> He wanted out but was still working for the party on Tyneside in late 1930, despite objections from the district committee. He found refuge at ROP but was sacked in a confused affair over misuse of company notepaper.<sup>38</sup> He was re-employed at the company's depots in Scotland and Stoke-on-Trent, joining his son Stanley who also worked for the Russian firm. By 1936 he was back in the Midlands working at a filling station, and his political activity, particularly in the *Russia Today* Society, continued into the war.<sup>39</sup> Loyal, dedicated, dogmatic, with few alternative prospects, life and its vicissitudes ensured that Brain fell some way short of Bolshevik prototypes of the Marxist cadre.

Pollitt's eulogy to David Ramsay (1883–1948), memorializing him as 'one of the greatest fighters the working-class movement has ever known' (*Daily Worker*, 4 March 1948), owed more to hagiography than evidence. Ramsay's role in the leadership ended in the 1920s, his impact on the labour movement with World War I. The son of a Dundee clerk, he qualified as a patternmaker, and was active in the SDF and its successors and latterly the SLP. In 1914 he became treasurer of the Amalgamation Committee Movement and graduated to the NAC of the NSS&WCM. Arrested in the strikes of spring 1917 over conscription of skilled men and dilution, he was released on a pledge of adhering to union agreements; in 1919, when full-time London organizer of the NSS&WCM, he received a five-months sentence for 'preaching sedition'. He travelled to Moscow for the Second Comintern

Congress where his syndicalism, like that of his fellow shop stewards, crumbled in face of Lenin's insistence on a Soviet-style vanguard party. On his return, he announced, 'he was proud to call himself a Bolshevik' and advocated affiliation of the NSS&WCM to the CPGB (Hinton, 1973, pp. 204, 249, 324, 325; Kendall, 1969, pp. 158, 228–232, 262, 371; *Socialist*, 22, 27 February 1920).

Ramsay slipped from sight in the early 1920s, assigned to the CPGB's secret 'Supplementary Department' and the Comintern's Anglo-American Secretariat (AAS) in Moscow. The security service recorded evidence of industrial espionage, but no action was taken, and he reappeared in 1926 as the party's Scottish organizer.<sup>40</sup> He married Nellie Hendrie in Glasgow in 1902 and they had a son, David Allan Ramsay, active in the YCL and employed at ROP. Ramsay later lived with the London party activist, Minnie D'Aprano, wife of Francesco, another party member whom she divorced in 1927.<sup>41</sup> In 1928 he requested a move from Glasgow citing ill-health. His observations to Gallacher when the party failed to offer him what he considered suitable alternative employment suggest the attitude of some CPGB full-timers and the resentment those engaged in underground work felt at lack of recognition and loss of income. Ramsay expected a position 'more in keeping with his standing. He had a record second to none but because his work had always been of such important and confidential character, he had not been able to advertise himself like the rest of us.'<sup>42</sup> After acting as Pollitt's election agent at Seaham in 1929, he worked at party-related jobs but announced in 1937 that he was returning to the trade he had not followed since 1920. Sketchy MI5 files suggest he was employed into the 1940s by various CPGB enterprises as a caretaker and warehouseman.<sup>43</sup>

The chequered career of George Hardy (1884–1966) cannot disguise his lack of impact on the British labour movement. Like Brain and Ramsay, his time as a top Communist was fleeting. Despatched by RILU in December 1923 to assist with the MM, he contributed

to its growth although the important Transport Workers' section he espoused remained weak. He substituted for Pollitt as MM secretary during the latter's imprisonment, was drafted on to the PB, and attended the Sixth Plenum of the ECCI in February-March 1926. He was, however, instrumental in reinforcing illusions in left-wing union leaders prior to the General Strike and resisted Russian criticism in its aftermath.<sup>44</sup> The episode terminated with the angry reaction of party leaders to his affair with Paddy Ayriess, half his age, the wife of YCL activist, George Miles and noticeably pregnant; and his removal via Moscow to China where he worked for RILU's Pan-Pacific Secretariat (McIlroy, 2004a, p. 289). His reappearance in 1928 failed to resolve differences over Moscow's vertiginous ambitions for a Red Seafarers' Union. Returning to Britain in late 1930 as chair of the RILU's International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, his activities unsurprisingly yielded negligible results in the shape of a new union or even a substantial Seafarers' Minority Movement (SMM). The circumstances were unfavourable. But Hardy blamed the CPGB. The Comintern declined to intervene and in 1932 he was removed as SMM secretary. He served as a party organizer in Tyneside, the Midlands and Liverpool and was involved in recruiting for Spain and the China solidarity campaign.<sup>45</sup> He demonstrated an enduring dedication to Communism and a high degree of self-sacrifice; but he had few alternatives.

His earlier history had promised more. Born into a family of farm labourers in Cottingham, East Yorkshire, he emigrated to Canada in 1906, joined the Socialist Party and subsequently the IWW for which he became an organizer in Australia and South Africa. Opposed to the war, he returned to Britain before relocating to the United States. There he was gaoled with the Wobbly leadership – he became general secretary of the organization in 1920 – but convinced by Lenin's arguments enrolled in the US Workers Party and worked for RILU in Berlin (Flinn & Morgan, 2003, pp. 98–104; McIlroy, 2004a, pp. 288–289). His children with his first wife, Edith, were both active in the CPGB. Iris worked at ROP, later

for the Comintern, while George died in Spain. Rona, his child with Ayriss – they cohabited until she left him for Douglas Garman, the literary critic and future party education officer, in 1938 – was born in Moscow. Late in life, Hardy formed a relationship with CPGB activist, Dorothy Coulthard.<sup>46</sup>

Commitment and self-confidence hardly compensated for a mechanical grasp of Marxism and limited experience of conventional trade unionism. Nathaniel Watkins (1874–1952) was arguably more effective. ‘A fellow of sterling character, warm-hearted and a good comrade to work with’ (Murphy, 1941, p. 169), from the age of 20 when he became a delegate to the Garw district from the South Rhondda lodge, this Pencoed-born miner was immersed in the struggles of the SWMF. Blacklisted, he moved to Yorkshire, built a powerful branch at Bullcroft colliery near Doncaster, and was a leading light in the Unofficial Reform Movement. He took a prominent part in the county strikes of 1917 and 1919 and the singular strike of 15,000 Yorkshire miners in support of the ‘Hands Off Russia’ campaign. Instrumental in bringing the reform movements together with the NSS&WCM and a founder member of the CPGB, he was involved in preparing the launch of RILU and with Tom Mann served as the organizing secretary of its British Bureau.<sup>47</sup>

Featuring on three of the five committees which functioned during our period, Watkins was elected to the January 1929 EC but never figured thereafter. He was a leader of the MM, secretary of its mining section and, abandoning his own candidature, a prime mover in its major electoral achievement which in 1924 saw A.J. Cook installed as secretary of the MFGB. On his own account, from February 1925 until July 1929, ‘the whole administrative responsibility of the Minority Movement fell on my shoulders’.<sup>48</sup> Working at its headquarters in London and criss-crossing the coalfields, he excelled himself during the General Strike and mining lockout (McIlroy, 2004a, pp. 286–288). Testing times and increasing hostility in the unions from 1927 saw the decline of the MM and Communist influence in the MFGB, a

process intensified by the Third Period turn. His long experience was now a vice not a virtue, and his fidelity to the line failed to save him. After working for RILU and the AAS in Moscow in 1930, he was dismissed from his post in the MM. His retention 'would prevent bringing forward new cadres in the leadership of the MM from among the new young elements who are coming to forefront, are not burdened with the old traditions and have a clear understanding of the present position'.<sup>49</sup> His criticism of George Allison, John Mahon and George Renshaw cut no ice in London or Moscow. Working as a 'commercial engineer' in London, he remained in the party but never again played a leading role. He returned to Doncaster in 1939 and spent his last years there.<sup>50</sup>

The party's most prominent person of colour, the Bombay-born bourgeois Shapurji Saklatvala (1874–1936), came from a Parsi family related to the Tatas who owned India's premier business empire. Educated by the Jesuits – it remains unclear whether he briefly embraced Catholicism – he arrived in England in 1906, where he married Sarah 'Sally' Marsh, a working-class woman fourteen years younger, a conventional housewife who never joined the CPGB and on her children's account remained a Liberal. He joined the SDF in 1907 and the ILP in 1909 but it was 1913 before he settled permanently, employed by Tata. He enrolled in the CPGB in 1921 and was elected MP for Battersea North the following year on the Labour ticket. He lost his seat in the 1923 general election, regained it standing as a Communist in 1924, and was finally defeated in 1929 (Squires, 1990; Wadsworth, 1998). 'A small man with a cultivated manner and immense energy ... an eloquent and charismatic speaker ... he has lustrous dark eyes that have a penetrating quality' (quoted Wadsworth, 1998, p. 1), as the CPGB's only MP, Saklatvala provided it with an important platform. In the Commons, he condemned imperialism, particularly in India, but also spoke on domestic issues, civil liberties and unemployment, the plight of the miners and the predicament of African and Asian seafarers. He personified the CPGB's internationalism although there is no

evidence that he raised racism within a party where it sometimes raised its head. In 1922, the CPGB press published an appeal from German socialists protesting against the deployment of African troops by the French in the Rhineland. Replete with racist sentiment, it drew no apparent complaint from British revolutionaries (*Communist*, 8 April 1922; Squires, 1990, pp. 138–139). He did urge the party to intensify its campaigns against colonialism and was a supporter of the League against Imperialism (Wadsworth, 1998, pp. 100–101).

He was unsurprisingly a maverick, in the party and on the EC, sometimes dismissed as an Indian nationalist, a well-intentioned socialist, hardly a Bolshevik. He continued to work for Tata and enjoyed a comfortable life. His secretary, Reg Bishop, was deputed to keep him honest. But he was periodically in hot water with King Street, as in 1928 when he delivered a sycophantic speech congratulating the Commons Speaker and attended an Inter-Parliamentary Union meeting in Berlin without consultation with the CPGB or the German Communists. A storm blew up when the press publicised a ceremony in which his children were inducted into Zoroastrianism (Squires, 1990, pp. 119, 126–127; Thorpe, 2000a, p. 74; Wadsworth, 1998, pp. 102–105). His expulsion was mooted by the party but as a national figure he was too valuable for the Comintern to lose. He was enthusiastic about Third Period politics and passed unproblematically from Leninism to Stalinism. But his defeat in the Shettleston by-election in 1930 and at Battersea in the 1931 general election proved to be his final forays into electoral politics. His contribution had been as an MP. Nonetheless, he spent his last years as a public speaker for the party. Taken ill when visiting the USSR in 1934, Saklatvala succumbed to a heart attack in 1936.

Two other members of this tranche reappeared briefly on the EC in 1929 but for convenience they are dealt with here. Like Saklatvala, Percy Eded Glading (1893–1970) advocated greater attention to colonial work. However, his career illustrates the range of roles trade union activists might be called on to perform and confirms Communist spies were not

uniformly university graduates. A member of the SDP/BSP from 1909, he was involved in the shop stewards' movement while working at Woolwich Arsenal during the war and came under surveillance from 1922 as a suspected member of the Kirchenstein spy ring. There is little evidence of this. To all intents and purposes, he was a militant engineering worker, frequently unemployed and active in the AEU and MM, although he and his wife and fellow Communist, Elizabeth, were close friends of Pollitt – Glading was best man at his wedding (Mahon, 1976, pp. 67, 121–122, 138). In 1925, he travelled to India to contact local Communists (<https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/revhist/supplem/glading.htm>).<sup>51</sup> At some point he resumed employment at Woolwich and was at the centre of publicity in 1928 when dismissed as a gun examiner for refusing to disavow Communism (Burke, 2008, p. 85). He worked full-time for the CPGB between 1927 and 1929 as an executive and PB member who also monitored Communist employees at ROP but his EC career was cut short when he was sent to study at the International Lenin School (ILS). On graduation he became secretary of the CPGB Colonial Department, was employed by the League Against Imperialism and maintained his activity in the AEU and MM. He was among those expelled from the union in 1931 for leading a protest against the national engineering agreement and was a founder of the short-lived Members' Rights Movement (Branson, 1985, p. 93).

It is plausible that, like other Communists during the 1920s, he kept his eyes peeled for anything useful to the Soviet Union. From 1931, however, he concentrated on building contacts inside Woolwich Arsenal. MI5 believed that by 1932 he was acting as a co-ordinator of information from Communist contacts to be sent to Moscow and by 1934 was part of a Soviet intelligence operation and in touch with the illegal *rezident*, Arnold Deutsch. He dropped out of open party work and following convention 'went off the map', formally resigning in 1936. 'Got', as he was codenamed, was valued by his handlers as:

a devoted communist, courageous, daring, painstaking and industrious ... Before I started working with him he combined his party work with our work. Material

destined for us was brought directly to him in the party offices where he kept it ... I insisted that he should observe the rules of *conspiratsia* (West & Tsarev, 1998, p. 123).

He proved useful to the Russians in other ways: James Klugmann's 'NKVD recruitment took place in early 1937 after Percy Glading, acting on the authority of the British Communist Party leadership, introduced him to Deutsch for the purpose of recruiting [John] Cairncross' (Andrews, 2015, p.123). Glading was arrested in January 1938 and sentenced to six years for passing military information to the Soviet Union. Glading – and Pollitt – had been outwitted by an MI5 operative, Olga Gray, who successfully infiltrated the party headquarters (Burke, 2009, pp. 87–103; Davenport-Hines, 2018, pp. 157–170; Hemming, 2017, pp. 81–85, 119–131, 178–192, 206–212; Thorpe, 2000a, p. 265; Thurlow, 2004, pp. 610–631). On his release in 1942 he was found work in a munitions factory and followed the Communist line by pulling out all the stops for the war effort. He remained a steadfast Stalinist, maintained discreet contact with Pollitt and continued to work for the party. In the 1950s, he was employed in the office of the North London AEU district secretary and CPGB member, Jack Reid, and was involved with *Labour Monthly*. His death was marked by a tribute from Dutt which celebrated his contribution to Communism but said nothing about his adventures in espionage.<sup>52</sup>

Although impelled to take other roles in the CPGB, William Joss (1884–1967) was able to pursue his vocation as an educator. A dour, dogged character, after his recruitment by J.R. Campbell in December 1920, he continued to work for the Scottish Labour College and attended the Fourth Comintern Congress in 1922 before finding employment as Newbold's political secretary. Having served on three ECs during our period, he made it on to both committees elected in 1929 but never featured thereafter. Between 1925 and 1929, he was a mainstay of the Agit-Prop Department, supervising the CPGB's national schools and conducting classes across Britain and Ireland. He was part of the improvised leadership after



the arrests of 1925 and served as an organizer in Scotland and Sheffield. Another representative of the craft strata, his background reminds us of how several leading Scots Communists were only one generation away from the land and the precocity of the proletariat they joined. Joss came from a poor rural family – his father was an estate gardener – left school at 13 despite winning a scholarship to Arbroath Academy and qualified as a skilled engineer. Working for Babcock and Wilcox, he travelled to France, Germany, and Argentina, and was employed by the British army. His introduction to Marx and IWCE came via the SLP. Although travel left little time for sustained engagement, he was active in the ILP after the war and pre-empted its left wing's entry into the CPGB . He emphasised his independence, citing his conclusion that Baldwin would not force a general strike and favouring publication of the Russian unions' critique of the TUC in 1926. He appears, nonetheless, to have experienced minimal difficulty in accepting the ever-changing Comintern line and remained a loyal Communist throughout a long life.<sup>53</sup>

### **The leadership of the CPGB, 1923–1928: coming men**

Categorization of Communists who figured fleetingly on the EC is complicated by the fact that a handful clocked up a significant number of appearances *after* 1928. Three newcomers to the committee in 1926 and 1927, all of whom joined the party after its formation, registered fewer than three appearances in our period. They differed from those addressed earlier in this article as they assumed greater importance in succeeding years. Allan was elected to the EC on an additional four occasions, 1929–1937, Robson four times, 1929–1935, while Kerrigan sat on very EC bar one, 1929–1965. In 1937, CPGB Cadres Commission papers characterized William Allan (1900–1970) as ‘a devoted party member – but was faced with responsible positions when quite young and did not take these responsibilities seriously enough’.<sup>54</sup> A contemporary remembered his ‘lack of a serious sense

of responsibility ... sometimes flippant and jocular attitude to organisational questions' (Campbell & McIlroy, 2001, p. 161). Born into a Catholic working-class family in Blantyre, he followed his father into the mines, working at the pithead at 12. He was active in the Lanarkshire union (LMU) and the Reform Committee, studying at the SLC in 1920–1921 – the year he joined the SLP.<sup>55</sup> Questioning its revived dual unionism and preferring the Communist emphasis on penetrating existing organizations, he switched allegiance to the CPGB in 1923 and was one of the first post-foundation entrants to achieve prominence.

Allan became secretary of the Scottish Miners' MM and tutored SLC classes. Arrested and blacklisted in the 1921 lock-out, he was elected checkweighman at Tannochside Colliery and a Lanarkshire representative on the executive of the umbrella National Union of Scottish Mineworkers (NUSMW) in 1924. A strong showing in the contest for LMU general secretary clinched his election to the party EC. He had been critical of the breakaway Miners' Reform Union in Fife. But by 1928 the machinations of the right-wing leadership of the NUSMW, culminating in refusal to permit members of the successful MM slate to take office turned his thoughts towards a Red union. Sentiment among militants converged with Stalin's policy; in April 1929, a Communist union, the United Mineworkers of Scotland, was launched with Allan as general secretary. He was a rebel, not an institution builder. The context was unpropitious for a union premised on the idea workers were moving towards revolution. Faltering steps towards reality were branded 'pessimistic' and in January 1931 he resigned (Campbell & McIlroy, 2000, pp. 39–54, 2001, pp. 149–163). After working for RILU in Moscow, he became secretary of a debilitated MM on its last legs (McIlroy, 2015, pp. 541–565, 2016, pp. 346–349, 367, n.6). In 1934, he started afresh in the Northumberland mines and forged a second career as branch secretary, lodge chair, checkweighman at Cambois pit, executive member of the Northumberland Miners' Association and Blyth town councillor. Like so many contemporary Communists, Allan aspired to create a revolution, but

ended his life servicing a reformist labour movement. Still an impressive orator, raconteur, and mimic, he played no part in the CPGB leadership after 1937 and his 33-year association with the party came to an end with the invasion of Hungary in 1956 (Campbell & McIlroy, 2001, p. 164).

Another post-foundation firebrand, Robert William Robson (1897–1973), evolved into a Stalinist apparatchik whose privileging of Russian interests and abandonment of any perspective of revolution in Britain led to advocacy of national unity and the conviction that pursuit of a socialist programme was irresponsible in post-1945 Britain. ‘The Party membership as a whole is living in the past ... we don’t want a violent clash in the general election ... It would not do the country any good’, he remarked as the war drew to its close; some in the Labour Party as well as the ILP and the Trotskyists were, he claimed, behaving irresponsibly.<sup>56</sup> The son of an iron ore miner who enlisted in the army at 19, he joined the ILP on demob and the CPGB in 1923. His political formation took place substantially inside the party and his integration into its small-scale bureaucracy was rapid. Appointed London organizer in 1925, he remained on the payroll for the rest of his active life. On the EC from 1926, he was instrumental in rousing London against ‘right-wing elements’ resisting ‘the new line’ and emerged as the party’s national organizer.<sup>57</sup> After 1935 he undertook undercover assignments, vetting volunteers for Spain; featuring on the Control Commission and, from 1937, the Cadres Commission; liaising with Communists in the armed forces and compiling information on the military supplemented by service in the Home Guard. In accordance with conventions governing ‘sensitive’ work, he took his final bow on the EC in 1935.

Throughout the war, Robson remained a ‘go-to’ man on issues of party security. In 1946, he contracted tuberculosis and thereafter his activity in the CPGB was sporadic. He moved to Somerset and dallied with Anglicanism.<sup>58</sup> He remained proud of his achievements – ‘I organized the International Brigades but nobody knows ... he knew more about the

present army than any other comrade'<sup>59</sup> – and rueful about lack of recognition. On the surface a one-dimensional bureaucrat, according to the party's cultural specialist, Emile Burns, he was well-informed on art and music.<sup>60</sup> In 1924 Robson married Leah Dersch, a Jewish woman born in Poland, whom he described as Russian. The marriage was dissolved in 1951, when for 18 years he had lived with Eirene Potter, a secretary and fellow Communist. They had two children, neither active in the party.<sup>61</sup>

Dutt remarked when Peter Kerrigan (1899–1977) returned from the ILS in 1930, 'he is a little of the CI official even as to a characteristic intonation in speaking'.<sup>62</sup> A model pupil, remembered as 'the most Stalinist of Stalinists', a fellow Communist noted on his return, 'all he could say was Comrade Stalin says this, and Comrade Stalin says that' (McShane & Smith, 1977, p. 212; Wicks, 1992, p. 127). If Robson represented the bureaucrat, Kerrigan personified the organizer on the Soviet model: he 'had very little imagination; for him the most important thing was to get the party line straight and lay it down for the rest of us' (McShane & Smith, 1977, p. 212). Over six feet tall, he was a youthful sportsman and physically courageous – police reports had it that he boxed under the soubriquet 'Kid Kerrigan'.<sup>63</sup> Fixated on results, he typified 'the species of the new party boss' (McCarthy, 1953, p. 160). Apparently devoid of humour, 'Calvin would have loved him' (McIlroy & Campbell, 2002, p. 60), his human side came out in his marriage to Rose Klasko, a Dublin-born, Glasgow-domiciled clothing worker of Russian Jewish ancestry, active in the SLP and CPGB who reverted to the dutiful party wife (Rafeek, 1996, pp. 72–84). He was a good husband and father, played golf and was criticised by members for holidaying in the Highlands in a car and caravan.<sup>64</sup>

The son of a Glasgow hammerman, later a tram driver, and a weaver, he left school at 14 and commenced an apprenticeship as a turner before being conscripted in 1918 and serving in the Middle East. Active in the AEU and Scottish Workers' Committee, he joined

the CPGB in 1921 but resigned protesting a decision not to stand candidates against Labour. He returned in 1924, attending the Third RILU Congress and the Fifth Comintern Congress in Moscow that summer. Thereafter, he exhibited scarcely a vestige of political independence. An enthusiast of Class Against Class, and each phase of policy that succeeded it, he made his reputation as Scottish organizer and enhanced it as British representative to the Comintern in 1935, and a Commissar and *Daily Worker* reporter in Spain. He was National Industrial Organizer, 1939–1942, National Organizer, 1943–1951, and Industrial Organizer, 1951–1965. An EC member for five decades, he accepted responsibility for the opprobrium attached to the CPGB after the ballot-rigging scandal in the Electrical Trade Union and stepped down after further problems in 1965. He opposed the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 in a retirement disturbed when his daughter Jean became a Trotskyist organizer (McIlroy, 2004b; McIlroy & Campbell, 2002, pp. 58–61).

## **Reflections**

This paper has provided a statistical overview of the 39 Communists who were members of the EC of the CPGB between 1923 and 1928. It employed a yardstick of continuity and a rough measure of significance by drawing a distinction between those representatives who served on four or five of the five committees elected during these years and those who sat on three or fewer committees: the first cohort we labelled the ‘core’, the centre or nucleus of the party leadership in this period. This designation turned on its members’ substantial or continuous presence on the majority, 80% or 100%, of the five committees that were elected in this period. The criterion is numerical and therefore restricted: some members of the ‘core’ exercised more power and greater influence than others and this is suggested in their biographies (McIlroy and Campbell, 2021).

The focus shifted from the ‘core’ to the more peripheral members of the leadership as suggested by relative infrequency of election. The essay proceeded to provide profiles of the subset of 20 activists who served on three or fewer executives during the period under review. In comparison with the ‘core’, they represented discontinuity. The turnover rate was volatile, ranging from over 30% in 1924 and 1926 to 17% in 1925 and 1927 (**Table 9**). There was a significant degree of wastage: a dozen representatives never re-appeared on the committee after 1928 while five never figured after 1929 – making a total of 17 (43.6%) of the group who permanently vacated executive positions by the end of the decade. Moreover, 11 of the contingent, more than half of the sample, not only departed the leadership but quit the party, findings which raise issues about commitment as well as stability in the leadership. More positively, three out of the ‘peripheral’ 20 continued to serve on the EC through the 1930s while seven remained lifelong party members, although their EC tenure did not survive the 1920s.

On a number of criteria, the 20 activists portrayed in this article mirrored the larger EC population of 39. They were almost entirely British born and exclusively male. There were six Scots (30%), only a slightly smaller percentage than that of the EC as a whole, and two Welshmen. Their age in 1925 ranged from Young, 24, to Saklatvala and Watkins, both 51: the mean age of the sample was 36.9 years, again similar to that of the larger cohort. Likewise, the social background of the great majority – 17 or 85% – of the 20 was working-class, but three emanated from the middle-classes. The occupational profile was similarly proletarian: 6 engineers, 3 other skilled workers, 5 unskilled and 3 miners, while 3 were professionals or businessmen. Their previous affiliations were diverse with no organisation predominating: BSP, 4; ILP, 5; SLP 4; Herald League, 2; Workers’ Committees, 2; IWW, 1; and 2 who possessed no previous affiliation or whose affiliations were unknown. Four-fifths

were CPGB foundation members – 11 adhered to the party in 1920, 5 in 1921, as well as 2 in 1922, 1 in 1923 and 1 whose date of joining is unavailable.

The 11 members – more than half of the subgroup of 20 – who departed both leadership and party constituted a disparate collection: they resigned from the party at different points over four decades and for different reasons. While all bar Thomas appear to have quit of their own volition, Elsbury and Clark were formally expelled and we have no detailed information on the resignations of Loeber and Quelch. Each individual case no doubt entailed complex processes of decision-making and/or drift, and most who left the CPGB continued to pursue socialism along different roads. Newbold's resignation may be linked to his personality and predilections, more generally to the flight of the intellectuals in the face of lack of success and 'Bolshevisation', while the exits of Elsbury, Tomkins and Wilson were connected with Third Period politics. Allan's loyalty endured until 1956. Half of those who left the CPGB – and possibly Clark – joined Labour; only Young moved left – to the SPGB.

It is difficult to discern explanatory variables which distinguish 'leavers' from 'remainers'. Several in the first category had alternative career routes: Newbold inherited a private income and like Clark and Tomkins – both of whom experienced the pull of reformism – and perhaps Deacon, possessed alternative career prospects. Wilson maintained his membership for a time while working at ROP and Young unsuccessfully sought party employment. Elsbury had burnt his boats with the union right wing before breaking with the party; rejecting confessional anti-Communism, he was forced to rely on his own resources. Among 'remainers', Saklatvala had business interests and possibly a potential career in Labour. He refused to follow Newbold's path while Brain continued to benefit from CPGB patronage into the 1930s and Hardy remained a party official into the 1950s. Glading, who had little alternative, received assistance from the party with employment while Quelch who secured a union post maintained his CPGB membership for a considerable period despite it.

Material factors intertwined with commitment and there is no reason to doubt that for many of these individuals, loyalty to the cause was a factor in maintaining membership. There were some differences between ‘leavers’ and ‘remainers’ in relation to age. The former had a mean age of 36.6 years in 1925; for the latter it was 42 years, which tentatively, given the very small numbers involved, suggests older Communists in this contingent were less likely to resile on a commitment forged in the early 1920s.

Our survey underlines the distance in general terms between Lenin’s vision of a team of committed, multi-talented mass leaders, and the CPGB elite. That 17 out of 39 leaders disappeared permanently from the EC suggests the limits to the continuity and stability he valued, a point highlighted in relation to commitment by the 10 of the 17 leaders studied here who also left the party (Lenin, 1902/2005, p. 786; Lih, 2005, p. 409). Their departures evoke the absence from British Communism of the organized conflict that Lenin insisted strengthened revolutionary parties and which marked not only pre-1921 Bolshevism but other Comintern affiliates. The exits recorded in this essay were *individual*; they were not part of, nor did they reflect, *collective* struggle. Despite extensive disputation and informal caucusing, to a significant degree the CPGB emulated the post-1921, faction-free Soviet model disseminated by the Comintern, with its prohibition of organized opposition and public dissent. The British case may be contrasted with the factional struggles, collective departures and breakaway organizations which formed part of the story of the American, French, German and other parties during the 1920s (Lenin, 1902/2005, p. 675; McIlroy & Campbell, 2019b, pp. 12–14, and, for example, Broué, 1997; Draper, 1957, 1960). This may be related to the paucity of strategic political creativity British leaders displayed. Whether or not it represented a counsel of perfection in an imperfect world, there was a contradiction between Moscow’s demand for critical thinkers, accomplished theoreticians and charismatic mass leaders on the one hand; and insistence on adherence to Comintern ideological control on the



other. The latter took precedence and inhibited development of the former. Talent, as Lenin remarked with reference to constructing collective leadership, was a relatively scarce commodity (Lenin, 1902/2005, p. 786), and the context, the absence of revolutionary opportunities, the resilience of reformism and the pressures of life in British society, further constrained the development of model cadres. Nonetheless, the CPGB enjoyed some success in developing a 'core' of 'practical' disciples of the Comintern who dominated the party leadership in the 1920s. They form the subject of a further essay.

### **Table 1. Executive Committee of the CPGB at the end of 1923.**

Tom Bell; J.R. Campbell\*; Helen Crawford\*; George Deacon; Rajani Palme Dutt; Willie Gallacher; Wal Hannington\*; Arthur Horner\*; Albert Inkpin (Organising Secretary); Arthur MacManus; J.T. Murphy; J.T. Walton Newbold\*; Harry Pollitt; Tom Quelch (RILU)\*; Andrew Rothstein\*; William Rust (YCL)\*; Bob Stewart.

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

**Notes:** The nine-man committee elected in October 1922 was expanded over the following year. An asterisk denotes the additions arising largely from the ‘English’ Commission in Moscow in June–July 1923. Crawford was added to the EC to represent women, Quelch and Rust to represent ancillary organizations.

**Sources:** RGASPI, 495/38/1, Transcripts of the English Commission, June–July, 1923; Macfarlane (1966, pp. 83–84); Klugmann (1969a, pp. 212–213).

### **Table 2. Executive Committee elected after 6<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPGB, 17–19 May 1924.**

Robin Page Arnot; Tom Bell; Bill Brain; Ernest Brown; J.R. Campbell; Helen Crawford; George Deacon; Rajani Palme Dutt; Aitken Ferguson; Willie Gallacher; Wal Hannington; Arthur Horner; Albert Inkpin (General Secretary); Tommy Jackson; Arthur MacManus; J.T. Murphy; Harry Pollitt; Andrew Rothstein; Bob Stewart; J.R. Wilson.  
Representatives of other sections: Tom Quelch (MM); Bill Rust (YCL). Beth Turner served as Women’s Organizer.

**Abbreviations:** MM; National Minority Movement; YCL: Young Communist League.

**Sources:** Macfarlane (1966, p. 87); Klugmann (1969b, pp. 359–360); *Workers’ Weekly*, 23 May 1924.

### **Table 3. Executive Committee elected after the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPGB, 30 May–1 June 1925.**

Robin Page Arnot; Tom Bell; Ernest Brown; J.R. Campbell; Helen Crawford; Rajani Palme Dutt; Aitken Ferguson; Willie Gallacher; Wal Hannington; Arthur Horner; Albert Inkpin (Secretary); Tommy Jackson; Bill Joss; Arthur MacManus; J.T. Murphy; Harry Pollitt; Andrew Rothstein; Bob Stewart; Beth Turner; Nat Watkins.

**Notes:** Bill Rust (YCL) and Tom Quelch (MM) were brought on to the EC. After the arrests of the twelve Communist leaders in October 1925, R.W. Robson and Joe Vaughan joined the committee, and Stewart became Acting Secretary.

**Abbreviations:** MM: Minority Movement; YCL: Young Communist League.

**Sources:** Klugmann (1969b, pp. 361–362); Macfarlane (1966, pp. 135–136).

**Table 4. Executive Committee elected after the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPGB, 16–17 October 1926.**

Willie Allan; Robin Page Arnot; Tom Bell; Ernest Brown; J.R. Campbell; Tom Clark\*; Helen Crawford; Rajani Palme Dutt; Aitken Ferguson; Willie Gallacher; Wal Hannington; Arthur Horner; Albert Inkpin; Tommy Jackson; Bill Joss; W.C. Loeber; Arthur MacManus; J.T. Murphy; Harry Pollitt; Dave Ramsay; R.W. Robson; Andrew Rothstein; Bill Rust; Bob Stewart; Shapurji Saklatvala; Tom Thomas; A.G. Tomkins; Beth Turner; Nat Watkins; J.R. Wilson.

George Hardy represented the MM, Harry Young, the YCL.

\*Clark was elected but refused to serve on the committee.

**Abbreviations:** MM; National Minority Movement; YCL: Young Communist League.

**Source:** Klugmann (1969b, pp. 362–363).

**Table 5. Executive Committee elected after the 9<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPGB, 8–9 October 1927.**

Willie Allan; Robin Page Arnot; Tom Bell; Bill Brain; Ernest Brown; J.R. Campbell; Helen Crawford; Rajani Palme Dutt; Sam Elsbury; Aitken Ferguson; Willie Gallacher; Percy Glading; Wal Hannington; Arthur Horner; Albert Inkpin; Tommy Jackson; Bill Joss; Peter Kerrigan; W.C. Loeber; J.T. Murphy; Harry Pollitt; Dave Ramsay; R.W. Robson; Andrew Rothstein; Bill Rust; Shapurji Saklatvala; Bob Stewart; Beth Turner; Nat Watkins; J.R. Wilson.

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

**Table 6. Geographical origins of EC members, 1923–28, and the regional distribution of CPGB membership, December 1924<sup>1</sup>.**

	London	Scotland	Lancashire	South Wales	Midlands	Yorkshire	Tyneside	Other	Total
<b>EC members</b>	25.6	35.9	7.7	7.7	2.6	10.3	0.0	10.3	100 (N=39)
<b>CPGB membership</b>	27.9	17.4 <sup>2</sup>	10.2	9.8	4.3	10.7	3.7	15.6	100 (N=4,371)

**Sources:** Derived from Thorpe (2000b, pp. 781, 790) and Appendix to this article.

**Notes:**

1. December 1924 has been selected as the mid-point of our period and to avoid the distortion of membership figures caused by the general strike and mining lockout of 1926.
2. Thorpe (2000b, p. 790, Note to Table 2) notes that the figure for Scotland relates largely to Glasgow and that many members classified as ‘Other’ lived in other parts of Scotland). Thorpe’s ‘Scotland’ and ‘Other’ figures amount to 33%, in line with the figure for EC members

**Table 7. Previous affiliations of CPGB leaders 1923–1928**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Number of leaders who were members at some point</b>
British Socialist Party	13
Communist Labour Party	1
Communist Unity Group	4
Fabian Society	1
Guild Communists	2
Herald League	2
Independent Labour Party	15
Industrial Workers of the World/Industrial Workers of Great Britain	3
Labour Party	2
Miners' Reform Committees	4
National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement	1
No Conscription Fellowship	3
Scottish Prohibition Party/Socialist Prohibition Fellowship	1
Shop Stewards and Workers' Committee Movement, including local workers' committees	14
Social Democratic Federation/Social Democratic Party	10
Socialist Labour Party	10
Socialist Party of Australia	1
Socialist Party of Canada	1
Socialist Party of Great Britain	1
South Wales Socialist Society	1
Temperance movement	2
University Socialist Federation	1
Women's Social and Political Union	1
Workers' Socialist Federation	1

Notes.

1. Multiple affiliations of individuals are listed separately
2. While some leaders were members of both the SDF/SDP and BSP, others were members of one or the other; therefore, these affiliations are listed separately.

**Table 8. CPGB leaders, 1923–28, who pursued higher education**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Qualification</b>
Robin Page Arnot	University of Glasgow	MA, 1912
George Deacon	University College, Reading (an extension college of Christ Church College, Oxford University)	Unknown
Rajani Palme Dutt	Balliol College, University of Oxford	BA, 1 <sup>st</sup> Class Honours in Classics, 1918
J.T. Walton Newbold	University of Manchester	BA, 1910, MA, 1912, in History
Andrew Rothstein	Balliol College, University of Oxford	BA, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Class Honours, Modern History, 1921.

**Sources:** University of Glasgow, *Registrar's roll of graduates and dates of birth*; *The Labour Who's Who*; *Balliol College Register*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1833–1933; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

**Table 9. Rate of turnover on CPGB ECs, 1923–October 1927**

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Total Membership</b>	<b>Number who served on the previous committee</b>	<b>Number of newcomers</b>	<b>Percentage Newcomers</b>
By end of 1923	17	9	8	47.1
May 1924	23	16	7	30.4
By end of 1925	24	20	4	16.7
October 1926	32	22	10	31.3
October 1927	30	25	5	16.7
				Mean 28.4

[Insert Appendix on a new landscape page. Left align all columns except for 5th column from left which should be centred]

**Appendix Members of the CPGB Executive Committees, 1923–1928**

<b>Name</b> <b>Date/place of birth</b> <b>Nationality</b> <b>Age in 1925</b>	<b>Social origins</b>	<b>Occupation/ trade union</b>	<b>Pre-Communist affiliations</b>	<b>a. ECs 1920–22</b>  <b>b. ECs 1923–28</b>  <b>c. ECs post- 1928</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>
<b>William ALLAN</b> 1900 Blantyre Lanarkshire Scottish 25	Working-class F: Coal miner M: Housewife Catholic	Coal miner; checkweighman; Secretary, Lanarkshire Mineworkers' Union; National Union of Scottish Mine Workers; General Secretary, United Mineworkers of Scotland; Treasurer, Northumberland Miners' Association	SLP; Scottish Miners' Section, NSS&WCM	a. 0  b. 2  c. 4	1923; left 1956 (d.1970)  Secretary, Lanarkshire Miners' MM; Organiser, Lanarkshire NUWCM; CPGB Rep. to RILU, Moscow; Secretary, MM	Janet Lowrie (1909–1984) Blantyre Scottish Bakery saleswoman F: Steelworker 1929 CPGB
Robert 'Robin' Page <b>ARNOT</b> 1890 Greenock Scottish 35	Middle class F: Linen weaver; journalist and newspaper editor M: Linen weaver; housewife Liberal Presbyterian	Glasgow University; Secretary, Fabian Research Department/LRD; National Union of Clerks; CAWU.	USF; ILP; National Guilds League; Guilds League Communists [CO]	a.0  b.4  c.5	1920 (d.1986)  DO; Comintern Congress delegate; ECCI; Comintern Rep.; Marx Memorial Library/Workers' School	1. Leila Ogier Ward (1888–1932) London English F: Doctor 1916  2. Olive Elizabeth Budden (1892–1982) Macclesfield English London University; heating engineer; welfare superintendent; clerk F: Teacher

						1936 USF; CPGB, 1920; Comintern Congress delegate; ILS; secretary, League Against Imperialism
Thomas Hargrave <b>BELL</b> 1882 Parkhead, Glasgow Scottish 43	Working-class F: Steelworker M: Textile homeworker Non-practising Church of Scotland	Iron moulder; munitions worker; journalist; Associated Iron Moulders of Scotland; National Union of Foundry Workers	ILP; SDF; SLP; IWGB; CWC; NSS&WCM; CUG	a.3  b.5  c.1	1920 (d.1944)  NO; Comintern Congress delegate; ECCI; Comintern Rep.; Friends of the Soviet Union; ILS section head.	1.Elizabeth “Lizzie” Aitkin (1882–1957) Ceres, Fife Scottish Dressmaker F: Stonemason 1910 SLP; CPGB  2. [Adeline] Phyllis Neal (c.1894–1977) Surbiton, Surrey English Photographic re-toucher; F: Railway clerk CPGB; Comintern worker; No evidence they married.
William Thomas <b>BRAIN</b> 1891 Birmingham English 34	Working-class F: Blacksmith M: Housewife	Engineer; National Union of Iron Founders; TGWU.	SLP; NSS&WCM	a.2  b.2  c.0	1920 (d.1961)  DO; BBRILU; Agit- Prop; Midlands Organizer RILU; Comintern Congress delegate	Dorothy “Dollie” M. Denney (1889–??) Liverpool Clerk in engineering company 1912 (separated late 1920s)
Ernest Henry <b>BROWN</b> 1892	Working-class F: Journeyman plasterer	Boot repairer; assistant editor, New China News	NCF; National Secretary for Conscientious	a.0  b.4	1921 (d.1960)	Isabel Porter (1894–1984) Tyneside



Bingley, Yorkshire English 33	M: Woollen spinner  Baptist	Agency; National Union of Clerks; CAWU	Objectors in Camps; National Secretary, ILP Left Wing [CO]	c.1	DO; Scottish Organizer; Comintern Rep.; Comintern Congress delegate; FSU	English Teacher F: Joiner 1922 Labour Party; ILP Left Wing; CPGB, 1921. Various party posts.
John Ross <b>CAMPBELL</b> 1894 Paisley Scottish 31	Working-class F: Journeyman slater M: Shop assistant; housewife	Grocer's shop assistant; journalist; Co-op Employees Union; National Union of Clerks; CAWU; National Union of Journalists; Army, 1914–18, awarded Military Medal.	BSP; CWC; NSS&WCM	a.0  b.5  c. 19	1921 (d.1969)  BBRILU (Sec.); Editor <i>Worker</i> , <i>Workers' Weekly</i> , <i>Daily Worker</i> ; Comintern Congress delegate; ECCI; Comintern Rep.; Scottish industrial organizer; general secretary.	Sarah Marie ("Mollie") O'Donnell (1885 <sup>1</sup> –1965) Paisley Scottish, from Irish family War widow F: Slater 1921 BSP; CPGB
Thomas <b>CLARK</b> 1875 England; brought up in Glasgow Scottish 50	Working-class F: Tailor M: Housewife	Engineer (turner); union official (AEU Executive) ASE; AEU	SLP; Treasurer, CWC; NAC of NSS&WCM	a.0  b.1  c.0	1920; expelled 1928 (d.1943)  Scottish Organizer	Christina Jeffrey (c.1880–1954) Scottish Stationer F: Tailor 1930
Helen <b>CRAWFURD</b> 1877 Glasgow Scottish 48	Middle-class F: Owned bakery business M: Housewife F: Presbyterian M: Methodist Conservative	Married a Church of Scotland minister (d.1914) and a Communist businessman (in 1944)	Temperance movement; WSPU; Vice-Chair, Scottish Division ILP; ILP Left Wing	a.0  b.5  c.1	1921 (d.1954)  Responsible for women's work, 1921–1922; Comintern	1. Reverend Alexander Montgomery Crawford (1830–1914), a widower Scottish Church of Scotland minister F: Dyer 1898

					Congress delegate; WIR; FSU	Temperance campaigner; anti- militarist  2. George Anderson (1872–1951), a widower Scottish Master blacksmith F: Master blacksmith 1944 CPGB
George Leonard <b>DEACON</b> 1893 Reading English 32	Working-class F: Carpenter M: Housewife Quakers	Clerk; newsagent/tobacconist; company secretary; lecturer on banking, finance and commerce; University College, Reading National Union of Clerks	Tory until 1910; ILP; NCF; Herald League (Communist Group). [CO]	a.3  b.2  c.0	1920; left late 1920s→LP (d.1968)  Treasurer; Control Commission	Winifred Augusta Gaines (1895–1926) Reading English Draper’s shop assistant F: Tinman in factory 1914 CPGB?
Rajani Palme <b>DUTT</b> 1896 Cambridge English 29	Middle-class (Professional) Immigrant family F: Bengali doctor M: Swedish writer/housewife	Oxford University; school teacher; LRD; General and Municipal Workers’ Union; National Union of Journalists.	ILP; National Guilds League; Guilds League Communists. [CO]	a.1  b.5  c.19	1920 (d.1974)  Editor, <i>Labour Monthly, Workers’ Weekly</i> ; Comintern Congress delegate; ECCI candidate (1935); ‘General Secretary’ (1939– 1941)	Salme Murrik (1888–1964) Estonian Comintern representative in Britain, 1920 F: Estonian lawyer 1924 CPGB
Sam <b>ELSBURY</b> (Salmore Elfski) 1880	Working-class Russian Jewish immigrant family	‘Tailor and draper on own account’; union official; Amalgamated Jewish	SDF/SDP/BSP [CO]	a.0  b.1	1920; expelled 1929 (d.1972)	Rebecca Moses (1881–1956) Leeds

Russia Russian; naturalized British 45	F: Tailor's presser M: Housewife	Tailors; United Garment Workers; Tailor and Garment Workers' Union; United Clothing Workers Union		c.0	EC member, MM; Comintern Congress delegate	English, both parents Russian Jewish immigrants (naturalised 1887) Probably tailoress F: Tailor By 1910 SDF/SDP/BSP; CPGB?
Aitken <b>FERGUSON</b> 1890 Glasgow Scottish 35	Working-class F: Ironmoulder M: Housewife	Boilermaker; Army, 1916–1919 Amalgamated Society of Boilermakers	SLP; CWC	a.0 b.4 c.0	1920 (d.1975)  DO; Scottish organizer	Janet McGibbon Mitchell (1889–1984) Blairgowrie, Perthshire Scottish Coatmaker/tailor F: Housepainter 1932
William Jackson <b>GALLACHER</b> 1881 Paisley, near Glasgow Scottish 44	Working-class F: Agricultural labourer; foundry labourer M: Farm servant; washer woman Catholic	Brass finisher; munitions worker; United Brassfounders' Association; AEU	ILP; SDF/SDP/BSP; CWC; NSS&WCM; CLP	a.2 b.5 c.18	1921 (d.1965)  Vice Chair; BBRILU (Sec.); Comintern Congress delegate; Comintern rep.; ECCI; MP, West Fife (1935–1950); Chair (1943–56); President (1956–1963).	Jeanie M. Roy (1884–1962) Greenock Scottish Dairy shopwoman F: Blacksmith 1913 CPGB
Percy Eded <b>GLADING</b> 1893 Leyton, near London English 32	Working-class F: Railway labourer M: Housewife	Engineer (grinder); gun examiner; munitions worker; AEU office worker; ASE; AEU.	SDP/BSP	a.0 b.1 c.1	1920 (d.1970)  Head, CPGB Colonial Department;	1. Elizabeth D. Cochrane (1890–1984) Bilbao, Spain English Schoolteacher 1916 Estranged by 1930s

					Secretary, British League Against Imperialism; ILS; convicted of espionage 1938	CPGB 2. Rosa Shar (1903–2004) Hackney, London English, Russian parents Comintern courier, ROP employee; secretary F: Baker No evidence of marriage but changed name to Glading by deed poll. YCL Executive; CPGB
Walter “Wal” <b>HANNINGTON</b> 1896 Kentish Town, London English 29	Working-class F: Foreman bricklayer M: Housewife	Engineer (toolmaker); Amalgamated Society of Toolmakers; AEU	BSP; NSS&WCM; NUWCM	a.0 b.5 c.3	1920 (d.1966)	Polly Winifred Stanley (1911–1990) Kentish Town, London English F: Railway coal porter 1917 CPGB
George <b>HARDY</b> 1884 Cottingham, Beverley, Yorkshire English 41	Working-class F: Farm labourer M: Housewife Baptist	Farm worker; shipyard worker; seafarer; dock worker; press correspondent; union official; bookshop manager (Collets); RILU worker	SPC; IWW (General Secretary)	a.0 b.1 c.0	1922? (d.1966)  Secretary, MM; President, International Seamen and Harbour Workers (RILU); Organiser, Seamen’s MM; DO	1. Edith 1907 (Canada)  2. Patricia “Paddy” Jessie Emma Ayriess (1903–2000), Edmonton, London, relationship from 1925/26 until 1938/39. CPGB; Comintern and RILU functionary; secretary to Soviet ambassador, 1937–1944. F: Tailor’s presser

						3. Dorothy E. Coulthard (1911–1960) Newcastle English Schoolteacher No evidence married. CPGB
Arthur Lewis <b>HORNER</b> 1894 Merthyr Tydfil, Wales Welsh 31	Working-class F: Chargehand railway porter English M: Housewife English, Conservative Churches of Christ	Grocer's assistant; trained as pastor; coal miner; checkweighman; RILU worker; miners' agent; President, SWMF; Secretary, NUM	ILP; South Wales Unofficial Reform Committee; SWSS [CO]	a.0  b.5  c.10	1921 (d.1968)  Secretary, Miners' MM; Secretary, MM; Vice-Chair, NUWCM; candidate member, ECCI; Executive Bureau, RILU	Ethel Mary Merrick (1895–1965) Merthyr Vale, Glamorgan Welsh (English parents) No occupation F: Pitman, Colliery surface 1916 CPGB
Albert Samuel <b>INKPIN</b> 1884 London English 41	Working-class F: Cabinetmaker M: Housewife Church of England	Office boy; clerk; National Union of Clerks; CAWU	SDF/SDP/BSP	a.5  b.5  c.1	1920 (d.1944)  Secretary; International Secretariat, FSU; Secretary, <i>Russia</i> <i>Today</i> Society	Julia Raven (1887–1959) Poplar, London English, Russian parents Later worked as telephonist. F: Cabinet maker 1910 SDP/BSP; CPGB
Thomas Alfred <b>JACKSON</b> 1879 London English 46	Working-class F: Composer M: Housewife	Composer; social/political lecturer; writer; London Society of Composers	SDF; SPGB; SLP; CUG	a.1  b.4  c.1	1920 (d.1955)  Editor; DO	1. Katherine "Katie" Sarah Hawkins (1871–1927) Hackney, London School teacher F: Master mariner Cohabited, from c.1903, married 1911

						CPGB?  2. Lydia Packman (1894–1943) London English Dressmaker’s assistant; LRD worker F: Piano finisher 1927 CPGB Women’s Committee, 1920s
<b>William JOSS</b> 1884 Arbroath, Scotland Scottish 41	Working-class F: Estate gardener M: Housewife	Mill mechanic; engineer (fitter); tutor at SLC; ASE; AEU	SLP; ILP	a.0  b.3  c.2	1920 (d.1967)  Secretary to Newbold; Comintern Congress delegate; Agit-Prop; Scottish Organizer; DO	Single
<b>Peter KERRIGAN</b> 1899 Glasgow Scottish 26	Working-class F: Hammerman; tramway bus driver M: Weaver; housewife Presbyterian	Army service, 1918–1920; iron turner; AEU		a.0  b.1  c.18	1921; left 1922; rejoined 1924 (d.1977)  Scottish MM secretary; Comintern Congress delegate; ECCI; Comintern rep.; Scottish Secretary; NO; National Industrial Organizer; ILS	Rose Klasko (1903–1995) Dublin; brought up in Glasgow. Scottish Clothing worker F: Tailor 1926 SLP; CPGB

William Cornelius <b>LOEBER</b> 1891 London English 34	Working-class F: Dustman M: Housewife	Railway carriage cleaner; Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants; National Union of Railwaymen		a.0 b.2 c.1	left 1940. (d.1965)  Railwayworkers' MM	Single but relationship with Catherine "Katie" Cant (1899– 1980) Glasgow University; teacher; clerk; cook F: Photographer CPGB
Arthur <b>MacMANUS</b> 1888 Glasgow Scottish 37	Working-class Irish immigrant parents F: Crystal packer; shipyard labourer; engineman M: Housewife Irish Nationalist Catholic	Engineer in sewing machine factory; munitions worker; journalist; ASE	SLP;IWGB; CWC; NSS&WCM; CUG.	a.5 b.4 c.0	1920 (d.1927)  Chair; Comintern Congress delegate; ECCI; Comintern Rep.	Harriette Ann 'Hettie' Wheeldon (1891–1920) English School teacher; shop assistant F: Train driver; commercial traveller 1920 WSPU; Secretary, Derby NCF.
John Thomas "Jack" <b>MURPHY</b> 1888 Ardwick, Manchester English 37	Working-class F: Blacksmith's striker M: Domestic servant; housewife F: Catholic M: Baptist	Clerk; turner in toolroom; munitions worker; ASE	SLP; NSS&WCM.	a.3 b.5 c.2	1920; left 1932 → LP/Socialist League (d.1965)  BBRILU; Acting Secretary, CPGB; Comintern Congress delegate; ECCI; Comintern rep.; correspondent <i>Pravda</i>	Ethel "Molly" Morris (1890–1964) English Nurse F: foreman cutter in rubber factory; unemployed 1921 WSPU; CPGB; nurse in Spain.
John Turner Walton <b>NEWBOLD</b> 1888 Culcheth, Lancashire English 37	Bourgeois F: Corn merchant (Irish) M: Housewife Quakers, Liberal	Manchester University; journalist.	Fabian Society; ILP; BSP; ILP Left wing [CO]	a.0 b.1 c.0	1921; resigned 1924→ LP→ Social Democratic Federation, 1928 (d.1943)	Marjorie Neilson (1884–1926) Beith, Ayrshire Scottish Glasgow University; school teacher

					MP for Motherwell (1922–23) Comintern Congress delegate.	F: Foreman cabinet maker 1915 ILP; Comintern Congress delegate; CPGB, 1921
Harry <b>POLLITT</b> 1890 Droylsden, Manchester English 35	Working-class F: Blacksmith's striker M: Textile worker ILP (M)	Boilermaker; Amalgamated Society of Boilermakers	ILP; BSP; WSF.	a.1  b.5  c.17	1920? (d.1960)  BBRILU; Comintern Congress delegate; ECCI; secretary, MM; General Secretary (1929–1939, 1941– 1956).	Marjorie Edna Brewer (1902– 1991) English School teacher; secretary Illegitimate; F: Cathedral choirmaster 1925 CPGB; Comintern Congress delegate; ILS.
Thomas Eugene <b>QUELCH</b> 1886 Bermondsey, London English 39	Middle-class F: Labourer; journalist; editor/ manager M: Housewife	Compositor; journalist; trade union research officer; Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers	SDF/SDP/BSP	a.0  b.3  c.0	1920; resigned c.1950 (d.1954)  Comintern Congress delegate; ECCI	1. Mary Anne Button (1881–1965) Walworth, London English F: Labourer 1903  2. Henrietta 'Quelch' (1894–1959) No record of marriage
David <b>RAMSAY</b> 1883 Lochee, Dundee Scottish 42	Working-class F: Clerk, Foundry M: Housewife	Engineer (patternmaker); Comintern worker; ASE; AEU	SDF; SLP; Organizer/ Treasurer, NSS&WCM; National treasurer, "Hands Off Russia"	a.0  b.2  c.0	1920 (d.1948)  Comintern Congress delegate; Scottish organizer; CPGB Supplementary Department	1. Nellie Hendry (1882–??) Sanquar, Dumfriesshire Scottish Domestic servant F: Master draper and grocer 1902



						2. Minnie Marie D'Aprano, née Lilley (1887–1965) Clerkenwell, London F: Flourmaker Married Francesco D'Aprano, 1907 (divorced 1927). No evidence of marriage CPGB
Robert William "Robbie" <b>ROBSON</b> 1897 Guisborough, Yorkshire English 28	Working-class F: Iron ore miner M: Housewife	Army, 1916–18; ironworks labourer, blastfurnaceman BISAKTA; ILP organiser; National Union of Clerks; CAWU	ILP; LP	a.0 b.2 c.4	1922 (d.1973)  DO; Head, Organization Dept; Control Commission; Cadres Commission	1. Leah Dersh (1889–??) Born Lodz, Poland. 1924; divorced 1951 CPGB  2. Eirene Potter (1910–1962) York English Secretary F: Metal roller grinder in flour mill Cohabited from 1933, married 1951 CPGB
Andrew <b>ROTHSTEIN</b> 1898 London British/Russian nationality 27	Middle-class Russian immigrant family F: Translator; diplomat M: Housewife Jewish heritage	Oxford University; Army 1917–19, journalist; Russian Trade Delegation; ROSTA; TASS correspondent; university lecturer; director, Society	BSP	a.0 b.5 c.1	1920 (d.1994)	Edith Lunn (1887–1970) Russian Clerk, Arcos F: Middle-class 1926 RSDLP; CPGB

		for Cultural Relations with the Soviet Union				
William Charles <b>RUST</b> 1903 Camberwell, London English 22	Working-class F: Bookbinder M: Housewife	Office worker; National Union of Clerks; CAWU; National Union of Journalists	LP	a.0  b.5  c.10	1920 (d.1949)  Secretary, YCL; Comintern Congress delegate; ECCI; DO; editor, <i>Daily Worker</i>	1. Kathleen “Kay” O’Donoghue (1902–1990s) Hammersmith, London English Waitress; ROP worker; <i>Moscow Daily News</i> F: Stevedore 1924 CPGB  2. Tamara Regan (nee Kravetz) (1911 <sup>2</sup> –2008) Georgia Russian Cotton worker; language teacher, Moscow F: Architect 1948. Russian party; CPGB; later National Women’s Organizer
Shapurji Dorabji <b>SAKLATVALA</b> 1874 Bombay, India British 51	Bourgeois F: Businessman M: Housewife Parsi	Company prospector; office manager; MP	SDF/SDP/BSP; ILP	a.0  b.2  c.0	1921 (d.1936)  MP for Battersea North (Labour 1922; Communist 1924– 1929); League Against Imperialism	Sarah Elizabeth “Sally” Marsh (1888–1977) Waitress F: Quarry worker 1907
Robert “Bob” <b>STEWART</b>	Working-class	Jute mill worker; carpenter/joiner;	Scottish Prohibition Party;	a.2	1920 (d.1971)	Margaret Purvies Lang (1879–1950)

1877 Eassie, Angus Scottish 48	F: Farm worker; carter; lorry driver M: Housewife	political/trade union organiser; Amalgamated Assoc. of Carpenters and Joiners; Scottish Horse and Motormen's Association	Socialist Prohibition Fellowship; associated with CUG [CO]	b.5  c.2	Comintern Congress delegate; ECCI; Comintern rep.; NO; Scottish Organizer	Glasgow Scottish Jute winder F: Painter 1902 CPGB
Thomas James <b>THOMAS</b> 1891 Ferndale, Rhondda Welsh 34	Working-class F: Underground fireman M: Housewife	Coal miner; miners' checkweighman; local government worker; SWMF	Secretary, Rhondda Workers' Committee;	a.0  b.1  c.0	1921? Resigned c.1930 →LP (d.1967)  Secretary, South Wales MMM	Ada Louise Radford (1894–1949) Ynysir, Glamorgan Welsh F: Colliery hitcher 1911
Alfred George <b>TOMKINS</b> 1895 London English 30	Working-class F: Chairmaker M: Housewife Church of England	Chairmaker; union official; Furniture National Amalgamated Furniture Trades Association, London organizer, 1923, General Secretary, 1941; National Union of Furniture Trades Operatives, General Secretary, 1947; Furniture Timber and Allied Trades Union, General Secretary, 1971; member Industrial Court; National Arbitration Tribunal	BSP; NSS&WCM	a.0  b.1  c.0	1920. Resigned 1929→LP; local councillor, Wembley, 1945–48. (d.1975)	Ivy Louise Wilkinson (1895–1966) London English F: Leather dog whip maker 1921 Labour Councillor, Wembley, 1940s; Magistrate
Beth <b>TURNER</b> 1895 Keighley English 30	Working-class	Textile worker		a.0  b.4  c.1	1920?  National Women's Organizer, 1924–1929	

<p>Nat <b>WATKINS</b> 1874 Pencoed, Glamorganshire, Wales Welsh 51</p>	<p>Working-class F: Mason M: Housewife</p>	<p>Coal miner; commercial engineer; Rhondda District Miners' Association; SWMF; YMA</p>	<p>South Wales Unofficial Reform Movement; ILP; Yorkshire Miners' Reform Movement; NSS&amp;WCM.</p>	<p>a.0 b.4 c.1</p>	<p>1920 (d.1952)  BBRILU; Secretary, Miners' Minority Movement</p>	<p>1. Martha Jane Jones (1874–1928) Ffestiniog, Merionethshire Welsh F: Quarryman 1895  2. Ann Collier (née David) (1875–1961) Bridgend, Glamorgan Welsh Nurse/midwife F: Coal miner Cohabited from 1918, married 1936 CPGB?</p>
<p>John Richard “Jock” <b>WILSON</b> 1884 Kilninian and Kilmore, Mull, Argyllshire Scottish 41</p>	<p>Working-class F: Gamekeeper M: Housewife</p>	<p>Miller; gamekeeper; shopworker; clerk; Socialist Party of Australia organizer; seafarer; dock labourer; ILP organizer; Union organiser; National Society of Painters</p>	<p>SDF/SDP; Socialist Party of Australia; Australian Anti-Conscription League; IWW; ILP</p>	<p>a.0 b.3 c.1</p>	<p>1921; settled in Australia late 1930s (d.1976)  DO</p>	<p>Sylvia May Ewart (1893–1970s?) Manchester English Secretary F: Joiner 1917 IWW; ILP; CPGB</p>
<p>Harry <b>YOUNG</b> 1901 Islington, London English 24</p>	<p>Working-class F: ran bicycle shop; furniture removals M: Housewife; sewing machinist Secularist</p>	<p>Tea boy; apprentice optician; telephonist; bookshop assistant; taxi driver; ambulance man; Comintern worker; teacher</p>	<p>BSP; Herald League [CO]</p>	<p>a.1 b.1 c.0</p>	<p>1920; resigned 1937; 1940 → SPGB (d.1995)  National organizer, YCL; YCL rep. in Moscow 1920s; English editor,</p>	<p>1. “E” Married in Moscow, 1923 Typist, NUWCM, 1929 CPGB Estranged by mid-1930s 2.???</p>

## Notes

1. On her marriage certificate to her first husband, James Carlin, in 1906, Mollie gave her age as 21 and her birth certificate states she was born in 1885. On her 1921 marriage certificate to JRC, she recorded her age as 30, suggesting she was born in 1891.

2. Tamara Rust's place and year of birth is unclear. MI5, on the basis of her passport applications, stated Moscow, 1906 or 1912; her party biographies as an EC candidate implied 1912 (KV2/3057); it is recorded as 1911 in the 1939 Register of England and Wales; an obituary (*Camden New Journal*, 25 September 2008) claimed she was born in Georgia in 1913.

**Abbreviations:** **AEU:** Amalgamated Engineering Union; **ASE:** Amalgamated Society of Engineers; **BBRILU:** British Bureau, Red International of Labour Unions; **BISAKTA:** British Iron and Steel and Kindred Trades Association; **BSP:** British Socialist Party; **BUF:** British Union of Fascists; **CAWU:** Clerical and Allied Workers' Union; **CLP:** Communist Labour Party; **[CO]:** Conscientious objector; **CP-BSTI:** Communist Party (British Section of the Third International); **CWC:** Clyde Workers' Committee; **CUG:** Communist Unity Group; **DO:** District Organizer; **DPC:** District Party Committee; **ECCI:** Executive Committee, Communist International; **FSU:** Friends of the Soviet Union; **ILP:** Independent Labour Party; **ILS:** International Lenin School; **IWW:** Industrial Workers of the World; **LP:** Labour Party; **LRD:** Labour Research Department; **MM:** Minority Movement; **MMM:** Miners' Minority Movement; **NCF:** No Conscription Fellowship; **NO:** National Organizer; **NSS&WCM:** National Shop Stewards and Workers' Committee Movement; **NUM:** National Union of Mineworkers; **NUWCM:** National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement; **RILU:** Red International of Labour Unions; **ROSTA:** Russian Telegraph Agency; **RSDLP:** Russian Social Democratic Labour Party; **SDF:** Social Democratic Federation; **SDP:** Social Democratic Party; **SLC:** Scottish Labour College; **SLP:** Socialist Labour Party; **SPC:** Socialist Party of Canada; **SPGB:** Socialist Party of Great Britain; **SWMF:** South Wales Miners' Federation; **SWCC:** South Wales Communist Council; **SWSS:** South Wales Socialist Society; **TASS:** Russian News Agency; **TGWU:** Transport and General Workers' Union; **USF:** University Socialist Federation; **WIR:** Workers' International Relief; **WSF:** Workers' Socialist Federation; **WSPU:** Women's Social and Political Union; **YCL:** Young Communist League; **YMA:** Yorkshire Miners' Association.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History, Moscow (hereafter RGASPI), 495/100/63, Report of Organization Committee, Fifth Congress CPGB, May 1922.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, RGASPI, 495/100/756, CPGB secretariat to Watkins, 8 January 1931. Use of the word by British journalists seems to have commenced in the early 1930s and then in relation to Russia: *Oxford English Dictionary online*, ‘cadre, n.’

<sup>3</sup> See the comments of Stewart, MacManus and Newbold: RGASPI, 495/38/1: 21, 44, 67, Transcripts of meetings of the English Commission (ECCI), June–July 1923, hereafter English Commission). Cf Jim Cannon reflecting on US Communism: ‘We decided that no one could be a member of the Central Committee of the Party unless he was a full-time professional party worker or willing to become such’ (Cannon, 1943/1970, p. 24).

<sup>4</sup> Three additional points are relevant. First, the Political Bureau (PB) consisted of EC members mandated to direct the party’s political activities. Introduced at the October 1922 Congress, it became increasingly important. To analyse the information gathered on its composition would extend and complicate the present paper and the task awaits another occasion. Second, the EC was answerable to the party congress but in practice wielded a great deal of day-to-day power. Third, the committee was known at various times as the Central Executive Committee (CEC) or the Central Committee. (CC). For convenience and uniformity, we have referred to it throughout as the Executive Committee (EC).

<sup>5</sup> Tom Clark elected in 1926 (Table 4), refused to serve on the EC – see below p. ??

<sup>6</sup> The comparable figure for the foundation cohort, 1920–23, was 31.8% of those for whom this information was available. Five were in both groups: Bell, Gallacher, MacManus, Murphy, and Watkins.

<sup>7</sup> RGASPI, 495/38/1: 7, English Commission; Thorpe (2000b, p. 786).

<sup>8</sup> Calculated from RGASPI, 495/100/435, Report based upon Party Census, 1927; Thorpe (2000b, p. 786).

<sup>9</sup> Calculated from RGASPI, 495/100/435, Party Census.

<sup>10</sup> RGASPI, 495/100/104, PB, 6 November 1923; Communist Party Archive, Labour History Archive and Study Centre, Manchester (hereafter CPA), CP/CENT/CONG/01/06, Executive Committee Report to Party Congress, May 1924; Macfarlane (1966, p. 85).

<sup>11</sup> RGASPI, 495/100/171, Inkpin to Comintern, 12 June 1924; 495/10/227, Inkpin to Comintern, 7 May 1925.

<sup>12</sup> NA, KV2/1525, Arthur Lewis Horner, Membership of and offices held in extremist organisations. The figures are suggestive of party leaders’ conception of their worth and entitlement. The average weekly wage of skilled engineers in 1925 was £2 16s 6d, of engineering labourers, £2 2d (Hansard, HC Deb., 13 July 1925, vol. 187, c. 671).

<sup>13</sup> Registered in 1924, ROP possessed a network of 30 offices and depots throughout Britain by 1930, employing about 1000 staff, approximately one third of whom were CPGB members. It was suspected by MI5 of being a front for espionage and potential sabotage and was sometimes a site of conflict over employment conditions between management and Communist employees (NA, KV5/71, Russian Oil Products Ltd; Davenport-Hines, 2018, pp. 158–159).

<sup>14</sup> Davenport-Hines (2018, pp. 158–59); NA, KV2/1869, David Ramsey [sic], Minnie Marie Ramsey, alias Ramsay, History Sheet, 16 June 1932; NA, KV2/1184, William Thomas Edward Brain, *passim*; NA, KV2/1022, Percy Edded Glading, Report, 20 September 1932; Home Office (1928).

<sup>15</sup> NA, KV2/2317, Edith Lunn, extract from Arcos Internal Telephone Directory, 1 April 1931; KV2/1186, John Ross Campbell, Report, 22 April 1931; KV2/1525, Arthur Lewis Horner, Special Branch Report, 12 April 1937; KV2/1184, William Thomas Edward Brain, D. Brain to W. Brain, 17 October 1933; KV2/1869, David Ramsey, Extracts re D.A. Ramsay, ROP, 30 April 1929, 1 October 1930; KV2/1180, Robert Stewart, Report, 25 February 1933; RGASPI, 495/198/942, Oliver Bell; 495/100/544, Report, 18 June 1928.

<sup>16</sup> Gallacher (1936, pp. 262–263); RGASPI, 495/38/1: 13, English Commission, Dutt; NA, KV2/584, Thomas Clark, ‘Espionage on behalf of Soviet Russia, 16 June 1927’; KV3/17, Kirchenstein, Jacob. Soviet intelligence organization; RGASPI, 495/100/111, Caucus for TUC, n.d., 1923.

<sup>17</sup> NA, KV2/584, Chief Constable, Glasgow, 25 February 1927. The indictment charged Clark had identified himself with ‘Postgate, Horrabin and Co. who are anti-Communist Party and advocate its liquidation’.

<sup>18</sup> NA, KV2/584, Chief Constable, Glasgow, 25 February 1927.

<sup>19</sup> NA, KV2/584, Clark to Stewart, 21 October 1926.

<sup>20</sup> Clark retained his links with IWCE, representing the AEU on the NCLC executive: NA, KV2/584, History Sheet, 1938; *Plebs*, November 1938.

<sup>21</sup> *Workers’ Weekly*, 5 September 1924; RGASPI, 495/100/235, Organising Bureau, 1925; 495/100/604, PB, 20 October 1929: ‘He ... not only left the Party but has stated so publicly’; 495/100/493, CC, 17–18 March 1928.

<sup>22</sup> RGASPI, 495/100/604, PB, 19 December 1929; Lerner (1961, pp. 131–136); *Worker’s Life*, 20 December 1929. On his brother’s account, Elsbury received a letter expelling him antedated to the day before he resigned (A.B. Elsbury, ‘Stalinist corruption exposed’, *Fight*, May 1938). He could be difficult and volatile. But some

party leaders wrote him off at an early stage: 'I do not regard him as a Communist' (RGASPI, 495/100/604, PB, 20 October 1929, Tapsell).

<sup>23</sup> Elsbury, 'Stalinist corruption'; Bell (1937, p. 133).

<sup>24</sup> NA, CAB24/161/33, Report on Revolutionary Organisations, 19 July 1923; Thomas James Thomas, Ada Radford, Census of Wales, 1911; England and Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index (hereafter Marriage Index), Pontypridd, July–September 1911; *Workers' Dreadnought*, 25 September 1920; Francis & Smith (1980, p. 30). Fishman (2010) mentions Tom Thomas in relation to the Miners' MM (MMM), the 1927 march and anti-government agitation, as a friend of Horner and Arthur Cook (pp. 147, 149, 150–153). Her text also mentions, with no detail or background, 'Tom Thomas from Hirwaun', a fellow inmate of Horner's in Wormwood Scrubs in 1918 where the latter was imprisoned for refusing military orders (p. 62); and Tom Thomas, described as an activist in the SWMF's Mardy lodge, who nominated Horner for the post of checkweighman at the colliery (pp. 64–65). It has proved impossible to discover further details of the latter although it appears unlikely that the MMM leader from Ynyshir was working at Mardy at the time. On the assumption that Horner's fellow inmate was, like him, a 'refusenik', we checked the Pearce register of conscientious objectors held by the Imperial War Museum. There were three individuals named 'T. Thomas' sentenced to hard labour in Wormwood Scrubs in 1918 but no further details were available. We concluded that the CPGB EC representative could not be identified with either of the other two Thomases in Fishman's account.

<sup>25</sup> RGASPI, 537/7/23, Nat Watkins, General resume of the development of the Miners' Minority Movement; NA, HO144/12143, Disturbances: unemployed miners' march to London in 1927; Fishman (2010, pp. 150–153, n.129). The caption of a photo of the 1927 hunger marchers refers to Thomas, pictured between Horner, Wal Hannington and William Paul, as 'ex-sergeant-major' (see Horner, 1960, photo facing p. 111). We have not been able to determine any details of army service from the records. The caption may arise from confusing Thomas, a tall man of military bearing, with former Sergeant-Major B. Payne, a Mardy miner who participated in the march wearing his military medals (*Scotsman*, 16 November 1927).

<sup>26</sup> RGASPI, 495/100/702, Report of [ILS] Student Group, n.d. [1930].

<sup>27</sup> RGASPI, 495/38/1: 75, English Commission, Inkpin. Deacon was apparently the chair who, infamously in some eyes, requested London members stand up in respect for their leader, MacManus (Brunel University, Burnett Collection Mss, Harry Young, Harry's biography [hereafter Harry's biography], 'Impressions: Arthur MacManus').

<sup>28</sup> RGASPI, 495/100/231, EC, 10–11 January, 15 March 1925. Winifred received a party funeral complete with miners' choir (*Workers' Weekly*, 19 November 1926; Linehan, 2007, p. 193).

<sup>29</sup> Harry's biography, *passim* and 'Women'.

<sup>30</sup> CPA, CP/CENT/CONG/01/06, CEC, Party organisation, May 1924.

<sup>31</sup> NA, KV2/1536, Albert Samuel Inkpin, Julia Inkpin, CC discussion on slate for December Congress; RGASPI, 495/100/619, Wilson to PB, 7 October 1929.

<sup>32</sup> NA, KV2/1537, Albert Samuel Inkpin, Julia Inkpin, PB circular, 24 December 1929.

<sup>33</sup> NA, KV2/1536, Ernie Cant to Inkpin, 25 July 1930; KV2/1537, Special Branch (SB) reports, 10 June 1930, July 1932; KV2/1184, William Thomas Edward Brain, correspondence between Brain and Wilson, n.d. [1931]; Wilson to May Wilson, 11 January 1934.

<sup>34</sup> Register of England and Wales, 1939; NA, KV2/1053, Ernest Walter Cant, Report, 11 September 1942, 'Dear Miss Thomas', 24 September 1942. Loeber was anomalous among this group who subsequently left the CPGB as he was re-elected to the EC in January 1929 – outside our period – but never subsequently. Given this sole, adjacent appearance, we have included him here.

<sup>35</sup> NA, KV2/1180, Robert Stewart, 'Dear Mr McDonald', incomplete letter, n.d. [1929]; Lazitch (1973, p. 323); Marx Memorial Library, *Quarterly Bulletin*, 26 (April–June 1963).

<sup>36</sup> William Brain, 1901, 1911 Census of England; Martin (1969, pp. 21, 197); RGASPI, 495/100/346, CEC, 29–31 May 1926; 495/100/351, Org Bureau, 20 January, 17 February 1926; NA, KV2/1184, Brain.

<sup>37</sup> NA, KV2/1184, Intercepted correspondence and reports; KV2/1184, Brain to Miss M. [illegible], Moscow, 25 October 1929. Brain married Dorothy ('Dolly') M. Denney in 1912 (Marriage Index, Kings Norton, Worcestershire, 1912) but at this time they were estranged.

<sup>38</sup> NA, KV2/1184, 'Violet' to Brain, 24 July 1930.

<sup>39</sup> NA, KV2/1184, Reports in burnt papers; letter from Assistant Chief Constable, Birmingham, to Sir Vernon Kell, MI5, 8 September 1936.

<sup>40</sup> NA, KV2/1868, David Ramsey and Minnie Marie Ramsey; KV2/989, Arthur Francis Lakey, alias Allen, Mr Harker's Notes on interviews of 28 August, 2 September 1928. The limited results of surveillance over 25 years are in files KV2/1867–1870; Thorpe (2000a, p. 53).

<sup>41</sup> The episode does not seem to have had significant repercussions in the CPGB although Clark threatened revelations. RGASPI, 495/100/28, London District Party Committee; NA, KV2/1868, 1869; KV2/584, Thomas Clark, Chief Constable, Glasgow, 25 February 1927; RGASPI, 495/100/544, Cases for Special Consideration (ROP).

- <sup>42</sup> NA, KV2/1869, Gallacher to Stewart, 27 November 1928.
- <sup>43</sup> NA, KV2/1870, Reports.
- <sup>44</sup> RGASPI, 495/198/1120, George Hardy; Martin (1969, pp. 48, 70, 71); McIlroy (2004a, p. 288).
- <sup>45</sup> RGASPI, 495/198/1120, George Hardy; Flinn & Morgan (2003, pp. 105–109).
- <sup>46</sup> McIlroy (2004a, pp. 288–289); Flinn & Morgan (2003, pp. 98–104); NA, KV2/2330, Jessie Emma Garman, aliases Paddy Ayriss, Hardy, Jessie Miles. There is no evidence that Hardy married Coulthard.
- <sup>47</sup> RGASPI, 495/100/754, Watkins to the Secretariat of RILU, n.d. [December 1930]; 537/7/23, General resume of the development of the Miners' Minority Movement, n.d. [late 1923].
- <sup>48</sup> RGASPI, 495/100/754, Watkins to Secretariat.
- <sup>49</sup> RGASPI, 495/100/756, Secretariat to Watkins, 8 January 1931.
- <sup>50</sup> Register of England and Wales, 1939; CPA, CP/IND/POLL/3/9, Watkins to Pollitt, 6 November 1939; West Yorkshire Electoral Registers, 1945, 1948.
- <sup>51</sup> NA, KV2/1020, Percy Eded Glading. Glading married Elizabeth Cochrane in 1916. In the mid-1930s he formed a liaison with Rosa Shar, a former Comintern courier and ROP employee, although there is no record of a marriage; Elizabeth left him in 1935 (Burke, 2014, p. 23; West, 2005, pp. 67, 69; KV2/1022, Percy Eded Glading, Report, 4 July 1935).
- <sup>52</sup> Dutt (1970). Rosa wrote to Glading in prison that Pollitt had referred at a meeting to the 'compulsory absence of his nearest and dearest friend', sentiments which met with 'long and prolonged applause' (NA, KV2/1022, Rosa to Percy, n.d. [1938]). Mahon (1976, p. 291); KV2/3057, Tamara Phillips, alias Milford, Rust, Regan, Kravetz, intercept, 7 July 1942.
- <sup>53</sup> This paragraph is based on RGASPI, 495/198/1137, William Joss.
- <sup>54</sup> RGASPI, 495/198/244, William Allan, 17 August 1937.
- <sup>55</sup> His comrade John McArthur recalled Allan was 'of Polish [i.e., Lithuanian] extraction' and we followed this in earlier work (Campbell & McIlroy, 2000, p. 36–38; Campbell & McIlroy, 2001, pp. 149–150; MacDougall, 1981, p. 36). Our recent research demonstrates McArthur was mistaken. Both Allan's parents were born c.1875 in Blantyre. Immigration from Lithuania only commenced in the 1880s and in 1891 there were only eight Lithuanian miners in Scotland. Allan's grandparents were Scottish and Irish (National Registers of Scotland, Birth Certificate, William Allan, 31 March 1900; Census of Scotland, 1871, 1901; Campbell, 2000a, p. 355). Allan married Janet Lowrie, the daughter of a steelworker and former miner, in 1929. There is no record of children.
- <sup>56</sup> NA, KV2/1177, Robert William Robson, Intercepts, 15 June 1943, 2 June 1944.
- <sup>57</sup> RGASPI, 495/198/109, R.W. Robson, 14 January 1932.
- <sup>58</sup> NA, KV2/1177, 1178, Robert William Robson; '... those put on to cadres work were ... "safe" beyond doubt. And whenever possible they were those who were least known to the public as communists' (Hyde, 1950/1952, p. 90).
- <sup>59</sup> NA, KV2/1177, Intercepts, 5 January 1944, 14 October 1943.
- <sup>60</sup> NA, KV2/1177, 14 October 1943. There are only occasional direct references to espionage as distinct from indirect comments – for example, when Oliver Green came to discuss how he could shed his secret activities (7 October 1943). For Green's activities, see West (2005, p. 223).
- <sup>61</sup> Details are scattered through NA, KV2/1176–1178.
- <sup>62</sup> NA, KV2/1030, Peter Kerrigan, Intercept 19 June 1930.
- <sup>63</sup> NA, KV2/1030, Fife Police Report, 13 February 1936.
- <sup>64</sup> NA, KV2/1030, Statement of Charles McKerran, 30 March 1933, Report, 1 August 1937.

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