



Socialist Labour Party

"Our demands most moderate are...
...we only want the earth!"

James Connolly

Trade Unions and the Socialist Labour Party

Comrades, Labour isn't working. That is obvious to every working man and woman in this country. The Labour Party, to which many trade unions are affiliated - the Party created to represent the interests in Parliament of working people - is a total failure.

Labour is the party of big business, supporting the rich and protecting their interests. It is not there to further the interests of workers, who through their labour, create the wealth for the owners of industry.

Trade unions were set up to protect the interests of working people through solidarity and collective action. They are there to negotiate conditions of work, pay and pensions, health and safety at work, sick pay, holiday pay and all things contributing to the welfare of workers, their families and dependants.

In 1900, Trade Unions and Socialist Societies established the Labour Representation Committee to be the political voice of the trade unions, although it wasn't until 1918 that Clause IV, calling for the abolition of capitalism, was inserted into the Labour Party Constitution:

"To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange..."

This basic commitment kept many members, over the years, within the Labour Party. Then, in 1994 Tony Blair, Labour's newly-elected Leader, announced in his Leader's speech to Annual Conference, his intention to remove Clause IV, a cornerstone of the Party's Constitution.

At a fringe meeting that evening, Arthur Scargill, President of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), argued there must be a fight launched within Britain's trade union and Labour movement to save the soul of the Labour Party. He proposed a "Defend Clause IV" Campaign which would take this fight everywhere.

Despite packed Campaign meetings held all over Britain, the Labour Party convened a Special Conference in April 1995 to vote on deleting Clause IV from Labour's Constitution. At the start of this conference, Arthur Scargill argued that its purpose was unlawful, and submitted that the motion to delete Clause IV should be rejected. However, his impassioned argument was defeated, and Clause IV was removed from Labour's Constitution then and there.

It was then dealt with all over again at Annual Conference in October 1995. Very few people - at the time and over the 30 years since then - realise why this was necessary, in view of the of the Special Conference held April 1995. It was during the week of Labour's 1995 Annual Conference that Arthur Scargill, speaking at a fringe meeting, proposed the establishment of a Socialist Party which would embrace the demand for "common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange.." with a voting system based on proportional representation. The Socialist Labour Party was launched in 1996.

Among the SLP's first National Executive Committee members were: Arthur Scargill (President), Patrick Sikorski (General Secretary), Bridget Bell, Frank Cave, Bob Crow, John Hendy QC, Joe Marino and Brenda Nixon.

The World Today

With today's world racked by unjust wars, including genocidal warfare, we oppose all Britain's racist and xenophobic asylum laws. The SLP is committed to fighting racism, xenophobia and fascism wherever they occur.

The policies of the Tories and Labour in Government have seen the destruction of basic industries, over 8,000,000 people unemployed and the steady deterioration of health care, education and welfare provision. The UK today is increasingly dangerous and unstable - unsafe for our children and our pensioners alike.

We all must be prepared to fight for the interests of working people: this means the strengthening of trade unions. Like international disputes, industrial disputes can be settled by negotiation, but in the case of no settlement, workers must be prepared to take industrial action to protect our rights.

Our Manifesto (see QR code) sets out our policies. We urge you to read it. We urge your union and its members to affiliate to and join the SLP which is the only Party with the vision of our forebears.

Arthur Scargill

Chris Butler