

## Leftist Wonderland: Militant in Liverpool

For those of you who are confused about what's been going on at Liverpool City Council, here are the facts:

Militant is a newspaper. The people who sell it are members of the Labour Party, although they don't support it, and supporters of Militant (the tendency, not the newspaper) although they are not members of it. The Labour Party leaders are neither members nor supporters of Militant (the tendency), and neither do they sell Militant (the newspaper), although you can never be sure since Militant newspaper sellers are notoriously shy about coming out.

The Labour Party leaders want to expel Militant supporters from the party since they think that they are wrecking Neil Kinnock's chances of moving into Downing Street after the next general election. They claim that Militant (the tendency) is in breach of the Labour Party's constitution since they operate as a party within the Labour Party, with different aims and objectives. But Labour's leaders are worried that to expel Militant might upset other Labour supporters and also, presumably, damage Neil Kinnock's election chances. So instead of expelling supporters of Militant, they have suspended the whole of the Labour Party in Liverpool—home of the Tendency's most vociferous spokesperson, Derek Hatton, who they especially want to get rid of. (There are rumours that at least some supporters of Militant are no longer so keen on supporting Hatton, but maybe we shouldn't make this any more complicated than it already is.)

Militant in Liverpool are very upset that the Labour Party is treating them in this way and assert that they, unlike the Labour leadership, are the real guardians of Labour Party conference decisions since they are resisting "Tory cuts" and fighting to "save the jobs and services for the people of Liverpool", and want to institute Clause Four of the Labour Party's constitution (the one stating that the Labour Party is committed to nationalisation). The Labour Party conference is supposed to be the main policy-making body of the party, but the leadership ignores conference decisions when they don't like them. So, just to recap, Militant, which doesn't agree with the Labour Party, is upholding its constitution and decisions made at conference, while the leadership, who do support the Labour Party, are ambivalent about nationalisation and Kinnock has said that he will ignore conference decisions if he doesn't agree with them. But it is Militant that looks set to be thrown out of the Labour Party for a breach of the constitution, while Kinnock is increasingly regarded as the party's saviour.

The Militant leaders of Liverpool City Council, as already mentioned, claim that they are fighting to preserve jobs and services. As part of their strategy to do this they sent out redundancy notices to 31,000 local authority workers and looked set to close down council-run facilities like day-care centres for the elderly and handicapped, children's homes, libraries, sports centres and swimming pools. Their concern for the workers of Liverpool was such that they asked them to work for nothing after they received their redundancy notices. The workers however could not understand how this was helping them (not surprising, Militant would say, since to them workers are too stupid to recognise their real interests and so need leaders like Militant to protect their interests for them). Teachers in Liverpool took the City Council to court and managed to get an injunction against the redundancy notices. But it wasn't just the teachers who were too stupid to understand that Militant were looking after their interests; just about every trade union with members working for the local authority have also shown signs of "stupidity" by expressing their hostility to the leadership.

Militant also claims to be working for racial harmony in Liverpool and to that end they appointed a community relations officer. That appointment has resulted in almost every community group representing black people in Liverpool refusing to have anything to do with either the council or the community relations officer and trade unions have advised their members not to co-operate with him. So much for racial harmony and community relations.

Finally, Militant claims to be "socialist". Apart from the doubt cast on this idea by their membership of the anti-socialist Labour Party, their support for state-capitalism, their undemocratic organisation, their

patronising attitude to their fellow workers, besides all that, this “socialist” tendency has just accepted £30 million from those well-known supporters of socialism, the Gnomes of Zurich, to bail them out.

So, to sum up: Militant are members of the Labour Party although they don’t agree with the Labour Party. Labour’s leaders want them out because they are in breach of the party’s constitution even though the leadership itself does not honour decisions made at the party’s conference. Derek Hatton and his fellow Militants on Liverpool City Council claim to be acting on behalf, and in the interests, of the working class of Liverpool and demonstrate this by threatening workers with the sack or asking them to work for nothing. They claim to be “socialist” but are quite happy to take money from a bunch of capitalist financiers who are no doubt rubbing their hands with glee at the prospect of making a financial killing from all the interest they are going to receive on this loan.

Still confused? So you should be!

(January 1986)