

RESOLUTION - CAROLAN

The decision of the LP conference on the register and the right wing majority elected to the NEC have laid the basis for a sweeping purge in the LP. The issue now before the right wing is whether they can carry it out.

There is good reason to think that we can stop them and minimise the purge. The actual ine-up in the unions whose block vote ensured the Right's victory is not solidly for a full-scale purge; the CLPs, which will have to carry out any purge, voted 80% against the register and voted hard left for the NEC; the right wing itself wants to win the next election and therefore has a keen self-interest in not purging the party to the extent that it goes into the next election gutted; and a thorough purge of Militant alone would probably gut the party.

For these reasons we can hope to stop the purge and limit expulsions to perhaps half a dozen, or a couple of dozen, members of Militant. A firm line by the CLPs of opposition to any and all expulsion of socialists, and resistance for as long as necessary and by every means necessary, will make the cost of a full-scale, or even a large-scale, purge prohibitively high for the NEC.

We must therefore focus our efforts on resisting the purge all the way, to the point of having CLPs disaffiliated and 'disbanded', and on attempting to unite the broadest forces of the Left to coordinate this resistance. What happens next is still an open question. Struggle will decide; and we can be central to that struggle.

The register is a mechanism of witch-hunt and purge aimed specifically, for now, against Militant. We must stand by Militant and argue against any grouping in the LP registering and thus helping the NEC to isolate and purge Militant. The principle for us is to resist the witch-hunt and expulsions, and right now that means resisting the register.

We need also to assess the prospects for the immediate period ahead and work out some rough lines of guidance for how Marxists should relate to the LP in the new situation created by the decisions of Blackpool.

Given the Right's control of the organisational commanding heights of the party, it is certain that they will move to cut out a more or less large chunk of the Militant hard core from the party. Militant's declared willingness to go quietly, accepting expulsions under protest and not taking resistance to the point of forcing the NEC to disband CLPs, makes it virtually certain that there will be expulsions. Militant's attitude is likely to encourage the NEC to enlarge the purge.

It is most likely that the forces of the broader Left will comply with the register in the next few months, perhaps at a 'decent interval' after the purge of the Militant EB and others. The LCC has reversed itself and now opposes the register, perhaps in alarm at the strength of the right wing backlash. Nevertheless it is most likely that the register will become established as the norm governing the affairs of the Labour Party, and that the groups like LCC, CLPD etc will register or be registered by Mortimer.

We must fight against this happening with all our strength and ingenuity. The probability of success is very low, however. Most of the leftists see the struggle now as focusing on the resistance to expulsions, and the argument that we must accept the register as a democratic conference decision is being shown to have a great power on the softer Left, despite alarm at the right wing takeover of the NEC.

What attitude should co-thinkers in the LP adopt if or when the struggle against the establishment of the register subsides, and the register is firmly in place? The options are these: to regard the register as a question of principle, and therefore slide towards an acceptance of being automatically outlawed in the LP as and if the register is established. Or to resist the register, but if the resistance is defeated to attempt to comply with it and to gain registration as a means of coming to terms with the conditions of existence in the LP after Blackpool.