Another Political Wreck
Being the Sequel to “Rocks Ahead!”

To the Working Class

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# The Issue

It will be within the recollection the membership of The Socialist Party of Great Britain that as long ago as April, 1906, the Islington Branch demanded action to be taken by the E.C. in the case of the Bexley Branch of that organisation, which had carried a resolution in favour of fusion with another political party. This resolution the Islington branch rightly construed as a violation of the 'Declaration of Principles,' and called on the EC to take such action as would cause the Bexley branch to fall into line with the principles and policy of the party. After waiting for two months, whilst the EC shuffled and quibbled over this matter of basic importance, it was borne in upon the Islington branch that the EC was either unable or unwilling to take such action as would enforce the unwavering acceptance of the Party's 'Declaration of Principles', by every branch and every member of that Party, and was consequently guilty of criminal neglect in the discharge of the functions for which it was created. It was not until this was perfectly clear to members of the Islington branch that the latter – as the only effective form of protest left – resolved to suspend propaganda meetings in its district until such time as the organisation had cleared itself of any suspicion of treachery or compromise, and had again become one beneath whose banner they were fully justified in asking the working class to muster. Instead of facing the issue raised by the Islington branch, the members of the EC, to divert attention from its own dereliction of duty, and to effectually silence the opposition of the Islington branch to the policy of muddle and drift, proceeding to rig out a Delegate Meeting which could be depended on to expel the disturbers of the official peace without any observance of the safeguards embodied in the Rules and Constitution of the party.

# The Delegate Meeting

That our suspicions regarding the impartiality of the Delegate meeting were more than justified was apparent to the members of the Islington branch when the report of our delegate to that meeting was received by the branch. This report read as follows;--

“13 Dunloe Avenue, S. Tottenham, N

July 30, 1906

To the members of the Islington branch S. P. G. B.

Comrades,

Having been furnished with credentials by your branch. I attended the Delegate meeting of the S. P. G. B. on Saturday 28th July, 1906. There was a small attendance of Delegates, about twelve altogether. I was elected provisional Chairman and afterwards Chairman, although the Edmonton candidates nominated a candidate against me.

The business of the meeting was to receive and discuss the Report of the Executive committee. This report containing erroneous information, as admitted by the General Secretar,y, it was moved and seconded that the EC Minute Book be accepted by the Delegate meeting in place of the EC Report as far as the particular matter under discussion was concerned. I ruled this motion out of order on the grounds that the Delegates could only discuss the EC report as submitted previously to the branches as per Rule governing Delegate meetings. For giving this ruling, the Edmonton delegates moved that I leave the Chair, and the motion was carried. Kiltick of Peckham, was then elected to Chair, and the motion was carried, Kiltick of Peckham, was then elected Chairman.

“The main business arising out of the EC report was the respective positions of the Bexley and Islington branches, the matter having been referred to the EC to the DM, under Rule 19. With regard to the Bexley branch, which was charged with violating the Declaration of Principles by selling the official organ of another political party, I asked why the Bexley branch was not charged with contravention of Party Principles by passing a fusion motion which had been specifically declared out of order by a Poll of the Party. To this question I got no definite reply.

The Edmonton delegate then drew from his pocket a paper whereon was written a resolution calling for a poll of the Party on two questions:

(a) shall the Bexley branch be dissolved? This resolution was seconded and carried.

“On asking the General Secretary to allow me to inspect the above resolution, I discovered that it was written by A. Anderson, and that the signatures [A. W. Pearson and S. Arty] attached thereto were in handwriting of the same individual.

“The meeting then proceeded with the EC case against the Islington branch, and the Edmonton delegate moved that the same motion which had been carried about anent Bexley be applied to the Islington branch. This motion be subsequently withdrew in favour of a proposition moved by the Wood Green delegate, as follows; –

“That this Delegate meeting condemns the recent action of the Islington branch in connection with the Bexley branch dispute, and also considers their conduct in violating Party discipline by stopping their propaganda, if condoned, will prove detrimental to the SPGB. Therefore the delegates here assembled feel it is their painful duty to herewith resolve that the Party should expel the members of the Islington branch who support their present attitude; and that this resolution be submitted to the Branches, as per Rule.'

“This was carried by 11 to 1.

“I may mention that the West Ham delegate (G. C. H. Carter) tried to get a motion carried to the effect that, as instructed by his branch, the Islington dispute be considered settled, provided the Islington branch would pay for copies of 'the Socialist standard' which it ought to have taken from Head Office, and pay to the EC 25 per cent of the collection it would have taken at open air meetings had such been held since the date on which the Islington branch had decided to suspend its propaganda. Carter explained that the West Ham branch was desirous of building a bridge of gold over which the Islington branch could pass from its anarchistic position. This proposition was laughed out of court by the delegates.

“At this point I asked the General Secretary to state the charge against the Islington branch, and to mention the date on which the charge was submitted to that Branch, in accordance with Rule 19, “the General Secretary (W. Gifford) replied that it was true there was no charge against the Islington branch. But before he had time to proceed further J. Fitzgerald (a non-delegate, being member of the EC) promptly got on his feet and contradicted the General Secretary by informing the DM that there were two charges against the Islington branch – namely

(1) Charging the EC with criminal neglect and refusing to substantiate same; and

(2)Anarchy

“Among the branches whose delegates stated that they had instructions to move or support the expulsion of the Islington branch were Edmonton, Tooting and Tottenham.

“During the course of the discussion the point was raised that the EC had no power to request a Branch to rescind a resolution, as it would be a falsification of Branch books. I asked why it was that the previous EC had insisted upon the Tottenham Branch rescinding a resolution re T A Jackson, whereupon A. Anderson (a non-delegate, being member of the EC) rose and glibly denied that the EC had ever called on the Tottenham branch to rescind any resolution. He explained to the meeting that what had occurred in the Jackson affair was that the EC passed a comprehensive resolution which satisfied all parties, and the matter was allowed to drop.

“I pointed out then that the matter was allowed to drop only when the Tottenham branch had actually rescinded the resolution in question, in accordance with the request of the EC, and I point out now that A. Anderson was lying to the DM when he made the above explanation. I say this for two reasons:

(1)A. Anderson was present and voted at the EC meeting, when it was decided to make that request to Tottenham;

(2)A. Anderson himself framed the reply of the Tottenham branch to the aforesaid request.

In fact, I may here mention that the entire correspondence emanating from Tottenham branch in its dispute with the EC in the Jackson affair was drafted by A. Anderson, a member of the EC.

Most of the then members of the Tottenham branch (I could name at least a dozen) heard him claim at a meeting of that branch that he was 'the man who did the dirty work of the branch' in connection with the Jackson case.

“Generally speaking, the alleged charge or charges against Islington were supported by arguments of the wildest and most childish deception. As an instance I may quote the following allegation made by AW Pearson, the Edmonton delegate. This individual proceeded to show that the Islington branch had been acting in such a manner as to block the work of the party in North London, and he clinched the argument by informing the Delegate meeting that some members of the Islington branch had absented themselves from a tea party in Dovecote Hall, Wood Green. Men like that had better be outside the organisation altogether.

Yours fraternally,

Signed

Leslie Boyne

# Machine-made resolutions

As showing the constitution and temper of the meeting, we would direct special attention to that paragraph in the report wherein our delegate states that at least one resolution proposed thereat was, even in the matter of the signatures of the proposer and seconder, written in the handwriting of A. Anderson, a non-delegate and member of the EC.

The fact of machine-made resolutions, emanating from members of the EC, which body's conduct of the organisation as set forth in its quarterly report was under review, would effectually serve to vitiate the entire proceedings of the delegate meeting.

# Distinction without difference

It will be noticed, while the Bexley branc was ordered to be dissolved on the grounds of its having sold the official organ of another political party, the entire statesmanship of the assembled delegates was unable to give a “definite reply” to our delegate's question as to why that branch was not charged with a contravention of the 'Declaration of Principles' when it passed a motion for fusion with another party. It requires a degree of prescience, which was exhibited at its best at that delegate meeting of the SPGB, to fully appreciate the all-important difference between a branch having, on the one hand, passed a motion for fusion with another political party, and, on the other, having carried that motion to its logical conclusion by publicly supporting the party, with which it desired to fuse. To the ordinary individual, who may have a fair working regard for principle, the distinction would seem to be one without a difference. Yet our brilliant EC regarded the former offence as merely calling for a communcation in the usual way to the offending branch, that its action was regarded by the party as a violation of the 'declaration of principles' while the equally brilliant delegate meeting regarded the inevitable result of that offence as meriting expulsion from the party. It was, we presume, so that no element of farce may be wanting, that the Delegates decided at the same time to expel those members of the party who first directed attention to the dangerous position which the organisation occupied as a result of carrying the bexley motion.

# EC members considerations

During discussions on the resolution re Islington branch the general secretary of the party distinctly admitted that there was no charge preferred by the EC against the islington branch. Before any further damaging admissions of this nature could be made, J. Fitzgerald of the EC interrupted the speaker, and presumably on behalf of the EC, proceeded to specify the charges which he alleged to have been made by that body. These charges were

1. Anarchy, and
2. Accusing the EC of criminal neglect and incompetence.

The former offence could probably be condoned: but the latter is the only thing within the bounds of human imagination which could induce our militant executive to put up a fight. It is not necessary for us to notice here the bitterness and personalities introduced by J. Fitzgerald in his speech preferring these charges. The charges themselves are exhaustively dealt with and completely refuted in “Rocks Ahead” pages 11-13.

# West Ham's bridge of gold

In order to completely demonstrate the incapacity of this meeting to adjudicate on a matter of principle, it is only necessary to refer to the proposal of the West Ham delegate that the Islington branch's alleged anarchy and breach of discipline should be condoned for cash consideration. Yet the proposal was seriously made, and introduced a welcome element of comic relief into the sordid exhibition of personal bitterness and manufactured opinion, supported by lying and misrepresentation. However, there may be more method in the madness of the proposal of the West Ham Delegate than appears on the surface. The West Ham Branch is, in a special manner, concerned in the sale of the party organ: and during, the quarter with which the report before the meeting dealt, the sales of literature by the Islington branch exceeded the combined sales of any two other branches of the party. Hence the proposal of the “bridge of gold” by which the efficiency and ability which characterised Islington's propaganda could be again exploited to make up for inefficiency and neglect elsewhere.

# Jury Packing

It will be remembered that at this time no statement of its position had been made to the party by the islington branch. It was evident however, that the members of the EC had devoted more energy to the misrepresentation of that position to the branches than they ever did to the effective working of the organisation, which they were supposed to administer. Proof of this is supplied in the fact that Delegates of certain branches – among which were Edmonton, Tooting and Tottenham – stated at the meeting that they had instructions to move or support the expulsion of the Islington branch.

The connection of certain members of the EC with the Branches indicating would explain the very judicial attitude of those delegates who attended the meeting with instructions to expel the members of the Islington branch, without having heard one word of what the latter could urge in justification of their attitude. Reference to Rule 19 will at once show that delegates acting in this manner had not a correct appreciation of the functions of the delegate meeting, as prescribed by the rules of the party. Both the EC and the delegate meeting acted on this occasion in direct contravention of the spirit and letter of this rule.

Rule 19 reads “Should the action of any Branch or member be deemed by the EC to be an infringement of the principles, policy, or Rules of the party, the executive committee shall at once refer full particulars of the matter to branches, at the same communicating the charges in writing to the branch or member concerned, and enclosing copy of this rule. The branches shall instruct their delegates to the next delegate meeting or conference to hear the case of the executive committee, and of the branch or member concerned and report. Branches shall then take a poll of their members and decide whether the alleged infringement merits expulsion from the party or otherwise, and the result of the poll shall be final.

# The Meaning of Rule 19

This rule, in the first place, distinctly lays it down that

1. If the conduct of a branch is in question, the charges shall be communicated in writing to it;
2. if individual members are concerned, each such member shall have a written statement of the charges supplied to him; and
3. a copy of Rule 19 shall be enclosed in all cases brought up under that rule.

Any proceedings therefore undertaken by the EC in which these provisions are not complied with are null and void and any “expulsions” carried out in violation of the prescribed regulations and procedure are simply judicial murders, examples of which are, unfortunately none too rare in the history of the Socialist movement.

Now, be it known, that

1. the Islington branch was never charged in accordance with Rule 19 -- the EC did not enclose copy of that rule with any charges, nor did it intimate in any way that the proceedings were instituted under that rule
2. not one member of the islington branch at any time received any written charges from the EC
3. in neither the case of the branch nor of any individual member was copy of rule 19 enclosed with charges

Rule 19 in the second place, instructs the delegates to HEAR THE CASE. This implies that they are to come with an open mind. How are they to HEAR THE CASE if they attend the court with the verdict already decided upon? What kind of jurymen are they that go to a trial with the verdict, IN THE HANDWRITING OF THE PROSECUTING PARTY, stowed in their pockets ready for use?

In “ROCKS AHEAD!” page 9, we pointed out that Rule 19 had not been complied with by the EC but our protest was disregarded. The consequences are recoiling on their heads not ours.

# Delegate Meeting's Logic

The delegates had before them a statement from the EC purporting to contain charges against the Islington BRANCH. No such pretence had been made that charges had been submitted to any Islington MEMBERS whatsoever. Instead of taking one of only three course open to any ordinary assembly of reasonable persons ina simliar situation – viz., that of

1. throwing out the charges against the branch on the grounds of irregularity:
2. finding the branch guilty and dealing with it; or
3. finding the branch not guilty – the delegate meeting ignored the islington branch and the alleged charges against it; and altogether exceeded its functions by presenting the EC with a blank cheque to be filled in at any time with the name of a member whom it had or may become convenient to the EC to expel.

# The Unit of Organisation

Rule 7 states that the branch shall be the unit of organisation. The responsible unit has thus been disregarded in the same way as the rules and provisions of the constitution. In “ROCKS AHEAD!” page 12, when we stated that we should not dispute the fact of the present EC being an authority on anarchism, if not on Socialism, we knew that, if given sufficient opportunity, the EC would justify our words. We see that in this struggle from its inception every rule and safeguard of the Party have been ignored by the EC; the ordered development provided for in these rules has never been observed, and finally, the anarchist attitude is unequivocally exhibited in the attempted overthrow of the branch as the unit of the organisation.

On reading the report of our delegate, and having become aware of the methods by which at the Delegate meeting a majority was whipped up to vote the expulsion of the Islington members, we had, we submit, sufficient justification for assuming that similar methods would be employed to confirm at the poll the victory for unscrupulous trickery which was gained at the delegate meeting. But even if this were not so, the violations of the rules and constitution of the party, already enumerated, both by the EC and Delegate meeting, rendered it impossible for the Islington branch to recognise the validity of the poll then instituted or to take part therein. Consequently, at the branch meeting held on August 13 the resolution contained in the following communcation and expressing this attitude was ordered to be sent to the general secretary: –

# Five Breaches of Rules

To all Branch Secretaries

SPGB (Islington branch)

79 Grove Road, upper holloway N

28th August 1906

“Dear Comrade,

I am instructed to send to your branch the following copy of letter forwarded to the general secretary of the party: –

COPY OF LETTER, 14th August 1906

Dear Comrade,

I am directed by the Islington branch to acknowledge receipt of resolution re Islington passed at that Delegate meeting on 28th July.

I am instructed to state that the Islington branch protests against the action of the Delegate meeting regarding the charges brought against that branch, on the grounds that the resolution passed in that connection is altogether unconstitutional. The EC essayed to make charges against the Islington branch and the delegate meeting, instead of dealing with these charges, proceeded to set the machinery of expulsion in motion against certain UNNAMED MEMBERS of said branch.

I am further directed to point out that rule 19 expressly instructs the delegates to the DM to report to their branches, and should a poll be instituted, it is provided that the poll shall be taken without the intervention of the EC. The Delegate meeting had, therefore, no power to instruct the EC to this matter.

Moreover I am to inform the EC, that Rule 19 does not empower that body to take any further action in conjunction with a member or branch, once the EC, has referred the matter to the branches prior to the delegate meeting or conference.

Furthermore, I have to state that Rule 19 expressly stipulates that charges against any member shall be submitted in writing to the branch and a copy supplied to the members accused. We hold that the delegate meeting exceeded its powers in bringing charges against members without naming them. To pass a resolution calling for the expulsion of some unnamed members is placing arbitrary power in the hands of an unconstitutional tribunal, a process contrary to the spirit and the letter of the rules of the party.

Finally I am directed to state that the EC is not empowered by any rule of the party to fix the date for the closing of a poll instituted by the delegate meeting, said power resting alone with that meeting.

For these (among other) reasons the Islington branch repudiates the poll re Islington now being taken, and declines to record any votes in connection therewith.

Yours fraternally

(signed) C. Thorp, Branch Secretary (pro. tem. 3)

Note In the 6th paragraph of the letter quoted in the above communication. Rule 19 is inadvertantly mentioned in place of rule 5. Such Rules however, are very explicit in stating that charges must be submitted in writing to the member or members accused.

“We send you the above letter showing the illegality of the whole proceeding.

We are not, however, so much concered as to what may happen to Islington Branch or its members as we are that the efforts of the EC to raise a new issue (expelling Islington) should be frustrated.

Remember it is not the Islington branch, which is on trial. It is the conduct of the EC that is in question.

Yours fraternally,

T. Bennett, Branch secretary”

# Political Assassination Decreed

In order to completely justify the repudiation of the poll contained in this document, it is only necessary to realise the unconstitutional nature of the whole proceedings and the farcical conduct of the entire affair at the Delegate Meeting. First, we had the General Secretary's admission that the Islington branch was not charged with anything in particular. That was perfectly correct. No charge of any kind had been received by the branch in the manner prescribed by the rules. Next we had Fitzgerald's official, or semi-official, assertion that there were charges preferred – which charges he proceeded to specify. The Delegates had thus before them two totally contradictory views expressed by the EC on this question; and, to show their logical appreciation of the case, they totally disregarded the alleged charges against the Branch, or the implied lack of charges, and introduced an altogether new element in voting the expulsion of certain unnamed members of the Branch. This action, we claim, opens a question of the most momentous importance. If the right be granted to any Executive to expel any members of an organisation, without naming or charging such members, then the way is open immediately to political assassination, and the efficient working of a democratic organisation becomes impossible. If for no other reason than to place on record our sense of the vital importance of the due observance of the constitutional procedure of the organisation, we in Islington would feel justified in repudiating the poll, and in consequently refusing to abide by its findings.

# The “Faked” Poll

When we come to consider the actual poll – the conclusive nature of which has been made so much of by the EC – we find that the methods by which the poll was instituted are faithfully reproduced in the procedure by which that conclusive result was obtained. Thus we find that the Tottenham branch – which sent in nearly half the entire number of votes recorded – voted twice on this question – i.e., took a poll on each of the two seperate occasions, and added the results together. This action was a direct infringement of the regulation governing the taking of a vote. The method to be employed has been specified by a poll of Party during the term of office of the first EC; thereby it was decreed that those members only should vote who were actually present at the branch meeting where the subject was discussed and decided upon. Of course, having regard to the influences that dominate the Tottenham branch, it would be too much to expect that any expedient, however shady, should be left untried to ensure that Tottenham voted straight, voted early, and voted often, at the bidding of the individual who previously claimed to have “done the dirty work of the branch” In another matter. It may be probable that similar favours were expected by the branch from the same source in the future. A sense of gratitude together with its corollary – the lively anticipation of favours to come – seems to be studiously cultivated by the members of the Tottenham branch. It would, we presume, be regarded as “irrelevant and impertinent” if we were to enquire how many votes, emanting from the big battallions on this occasion, were cast by men who, according to the Rules of the organisation, had a right to vote at all. The return for the quarter ending June, 1906, issued by the Head Office, throws an instructive light on the qualifications of those Branches whose members built up the conclusive vote. Thus we see that Islington paid dues on thirty-six members, and is credited with twenty-eight votes, whereas Tottenham paid dues on thirteen members and can contribute forty votes to any “decisive result” demanded by the EC. Comment is needless.

# Pistol Presented

Acting on the unconstitutional demand for a poll, and relying on a majority secured by the methods to which we have referred, the EC, on September 8th, sent an unauthenticated communication to the individual members of the Islington branch, which, after quoting the resolution passed at the Delegate Meeting (see Document a) and the statement of the EC (see Document I, page 10 of “Rocks Ahead!”), winds up with the following paragraph:--

(c) “I am directed by the EC to request you to state whether or not you continute to support the attitude taken up by the Islington Branch, of which, I believe, you are a member. If you cannot see your way clear to dissent from the attitude taken up by Islington, the EC will have no other course open to it but to expel you, in accordance with the voice of the party, which as you will see by the result of the voting on the question, was very decided. It is regrettable that this state of affairs should have arisen, especially after the vigorous and persistent propaganda that has been carried on in Islington by the Party, but nevertheless it is absolutely necessary in the interest of the Party discipline, which must be maintained if we are going to be an effective organisation. This must be answered before September 17th. Send answer to Head Office, 28, Cursitor Street, EC.”

We may mention in passing that we were so well accustomed to the business methods prevailing at Head Office that we were not in the least surprised that such an important document should not be authenticated by the signature of the General Secretary, from whom it purported to emanate. No doubt, in sending out this communication the EC had clearly realised the relative values of discretion and valour in this matter. The Islington Branch had up to this given an exhibition of solidarity and discipline on this question that was not lost on the EC, and which will not, we hope, be lost on the Socialist movement of the future.

Hence the charges of anarchy and worse so recklessly preferred against the BRANCH were quietly dropped, and the less heroic but seemingly easier and safer course adopted of taking each individual member in detail, and presenting the pistol of expulsion to his head in order to induce him to desert the fight, which was raised by his comrades for uncompromising Socialism, efficient administration, and political decency. The EC soon discovered, if it did not already know, that with that fight the members of the Islington branch were then, as they are now, proud to be associated.

# Islington prepares for action

At a meeting of the Islington branch following the issue by the EC of the foregoing document the following communication was instructed to be sent to the Branches:

(d) SPGB Islington branch

79 Grove Road, N

10th September 1906

To the Secretary, Branch SPGB

Dear Comrade,

I am instructed to forward to your branch the following copy of resolution sent by this branch to the EC:--

“WHEREAS at its meeting on September 10th 1906, several members of the Islington branch have produced threatening letters purporting to come from, although not signed by, the General Secretary of the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY that the Islington branch reiterates its repudiation of the entire proceedings instituted by the EC; from their inception down to the present time, and furthermore CHALLENGES to the EC to utilise its BOGUS POLL and FAKED MAJORITY by proceeding with the “expulsion” of any member whatsoever of this Branch.

The Islington Branch, moreover, having allowed adequate time to elapse since the issue of its statement entitled “Rocks Ahead,” is determined that if within 14 days from this date steps have not been taken by the Party members to remove the present incompetent Executive, it will forthwith effectively terminate the farce now being conducted by the EC.

The Islington branch desires an acknowledgement of this communication, together with a statement as to what action, if any, the members of your branch propose to take for the removal of the present incompetent executive and the cleansing of the party in accordance with the position laid down by the islington branch [as clearly defined in the Declaration of Principles of the party, in its admonitory pamphlet, 'Rocks Ahead,'

Yours fraternally,

T. Bennett, Branch Secretary”

As the communication containing the threat of expulsion was received with a dignified silence by the Islington members which must have now become exasperating, the EC proceeded to fill in the blank cheque by expelling twenty-three out of twenty-six signatories to “ROCKS AHEAD!” The notice of the expulsion was contained in the following circular : –

“28 Cursitor Street, EC

22nd September, 1906

As no reply has been received from you to the circular sent from above address, dated September 8th, you were, at the EC meeting, held September 18th, declared expelled the SPGB, in accordance with the vote of the party.

WM Gifford, Gen Sec, SPGB”

# West Ham Again

The Branches of the Party exchanged several resolutions on the question at issue between Islington and the EC, but amongst them the West Ham branch enjoys the distinction of being the only one which introduced the names of individuals into the matter. When challenged by Islington to produce evidence, the West Ham Secretary informed us that they were too busy just then, but that they would consider Islington's request early in October. Nothing further has been heard from them. As indicative of the methods of the West Ham branch, and incidentally as showing that the repute of the hero of the Edmonton horse-trough had extended to West Ham, the following document may be of interest: –

107 Ham Park Road, Stratford

4th January, 1906

“Dear Lehane,

I was instructed by the West Ham Branch SPGB to ask if you would allow yourself to be nominated as General Secretary, of course on the understanding that you could use a nom-de-guerre should you not care to put your own name forward, for business reasons.

I did not have your address, so failed to carry out the wishes of the Branch, but I have made sure of it now, especially on account of having heard that Anderson has been nominated.

This makes it an important question, and I urge upon you the necessity, in the interests of the Party of allowing yourself to be nominated as General Secretary, whether active or passive does not matter. We have no personal objection to Anderson, but in the interests of Socialism we do not think it advisable that his name should be put prominently forward.

Kent, I am sure, would be willing to do a large part of the work, as you heard yourself at that meeting when I resigned, but he is unable to have his name used in the manner which might lead his employers to suppose he was using too much energy on Socialism.

Let me hear from you at your earliest convenience, and allow me to hope for an affirmative answer, so that I may have the pleasure of laying it before the branch next Monday.

Our eyes are upon you – as the doggered hymn says, 'All our hopes are built on thee'

Yours fraternally

(signed) GCH Carter Secretary West Ham branch, SPGB”

Peckham Falls into Line

The subjoined document explains how the Islington Branch, having been visted by three members of the Peckham branch, who pledged themselves unreservedly to our position, dealt with the unconstitutional EC

“SPGB, (Islington branch)

79 Grove Road, London, N

24th September, 1906

To all Branch secretaries,

Dear Comrade,

At the regular meeting of the Islington branch, held tonight the following resolution was carried: –

WHEREAS, contrary to every Rule of the Party dealing with the question of the discipline of Branches and members, the Executive Committee has decided to send notices of 'expulsion' to several members of the Islington branch, and

WHEREAS, three members of the Peckham Branch – namely Benford, Morrill, and Wren – have this night visited the Islington branch and informed its members that they, in conjunction with other members of the party, had been, and still were, taking steps for the removal of the present incompetent EC, in accordance with the position laid down in “Rocks Ahead” (with which position the aforesaid Peckham members expressed their entire agreement), and in compliance with the terms of the resolution passed by the Islington branch on the 10th inst.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY that the Islington branch refuses to any longer recognise the present Executive committee of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, and defers further action for the period of one calendar month from this date, after which, provided the present EC has not been removed, the Islington Branch will call on the members of the working class to pass judgement on the issue

Yours fraternally,

T. Bennett, Branch Secretary.”

# Embodiment of Political Filth

It was, we presume, in order that no irregularity, or inconsistency which could possibly be indulged in should be left untried by the EC, that the latter refrained from using its decisive vote to expel all members of the Islington branch who supported the recent attitude, as well as those members of other branches who have indicated their approval of that attitude. Thus, amongst others, Comrade Innes, of the Tottenham branch, who had in that Branch an opportunity of seeing some of the methods by which the decisive vote was obtained, challenged by the EC to carry the farce to its logical conclusion by expelling him. The challenge was couched in the following rather uncomplimentary terms : –

(b) “27 Hartham Road, tottenham, London, N.

24th September, 1906

Sir,

Having been informed of the 'expulsion' of several members of the Islington branch, in direct contravention of the Rules of this Party, and, further, as no answer has been forthcoming to 'Rocks Ahead' or the position taken up by the Islington branch which I endorse in its entirety, I hereby repudiate the action taken by the EC in 'expelling' said members, and challenge the executive to continue the farce by proceeding with any 'expulsion'.

In the event of the EC not seeing its way clear to logically conclude its proceedings in this matter by 'expelling' every member of the organisation who supports the position of the Islington branch, please note I do not consider myself any longer a member of an organisation such as the SPGB, in which the embodiment of political filth has now full sway.

W. Innes”

“W. Gifford, Gen. Sec., SPGB”

The EC was unable to take up Comrade Innes' challenge, although he expressly states he is in the same position as the “expelled” members!

# Bogus Branch Formed

Having all the time carefully refrained from coming to close quarters with the Islington Branch, as a branch, the culminating point in this exhibition of statesmanship and diplomacy was reached when Fitzgerald, Neumann, and Anderson were appointed by the EC to reply to “ROCKS AHEAD!” (a sub-committee previously appointed to do the job being only able to report progress), and to reorganise the Islington branch. It will be remembered that the EC never attempted to dissolve the existing branch; but as has been pointed out, served a bogus expulsion notice on certain individual members. On the question of the organisation of a new branch in Islington – even if we accept as legal the expulsion of the members affected – there yet remained five of the original members, whose standing in the Branch was unquestioned. This number constitutes five times the entire muster-roll of the Clerkenwell Branch! We do not hear of any re-organising schemes being launched in Clerkenwell.

# Clerkenwell to the Front

Is it possible that the organising abilities of J. Fitzgerald could not find profitable employment in this district, where, after two years of persistent effort, he has succeeded in building up a Branch of the Party having the unique distinction of consisting of himself alone? After having organised the home district with such thoroughness and efficiency, it is not to be wondered at that J. Fitzgerald should sigh for new worlds to conquer, and transfer those abilities (which have made the Clerkenwell Branch what it is) to the benighted neighbourhood of Finsbury Park! In the latter district there had previously built up a branch of the party differing in every essential from that existing in Clerkenwell. This was altogether the results of the efficiency of the Islington members' work and their strenuous propaganda of uncompromising Socialism.

# From Edinburgh to Edmonton

Regarding A. Anderson's work in connection with the proposed re-organisation of the Islington branch, it is only necessary to refer to his well-known and deeply rooted aversion to the holding of propaganda meetings in the district from which his branch (Edmonton) takes its name. This reluctance is no doubt justified by the high appreciation of his character and attainments, which is universally entertained in the district referred to. The bottom of Edmonton horse-trough would constitute an undignified and uncomfortable rostrum from which to defend the ethics of the Andersonian system or to engage in the congenial task of villifying the members of the Islington branch.

It is regrettable that A. Anderson did not avail himself of the opportunity of retrieving in the SPGB, the character which he lost in the ranks of the SDF. The members of the SPGB, were prepared to py but little attention to the charges of embezzlement of Branch funds preferred against him by those who knew him in Edinburgh. The London comrades thought that A. Anderson's past evil record would have been compensated by a period of clean service in the SPGB, but instead of mending, he has conclusively proven his utter unfitness for any movement wherein political decency is a desideratum. If in the SDF, he earned a reputation as a financial swindler, in the SPGB he has established a record as a liar and political cheat. The socialist movement of the future will have to spurn such dregs. The man whose name stinks in Edinburgh, and whom the working-class of Edmonton threatened to immerse in the horse trough should dare to obstrude his presence on any platform in their locality, will do well to give the working class movement a wide berth for the future.

# A Pilgrim from Peckham

Regarding the other luminary deputed by the EC to assist in leading the forlorn hope on Islington's entrenchments, it is probable that in the immediate future H. Neumann will have his hands full in endeavouring to stamp out the disaffection which has made itself evident in his own branch at Peckham. The latter branch has officially associated itself with the position taken up by Islington branch, and has followed Islington's now historic precedent by suspending propaganda. Verily the troubles of our sorely tried EC are only beginning! It is earnesty to be hoped that with that courage and consistency which have always characterised its action, the EC will use those extensive and convenient powers of expulsion, with which the decisive vote surely provided it, to expel those members in Peckham and elsewhere who have joined with Islington in the unpardonable enterprise of defending the 'Declaration of Principles' of the party. In this way only can unity be attained; but it grows increasingly likely that when the disciplinary process is completed there will be nothing left of the SPGB except its EC.

# Peckham's Records “Falisfied”

However, it has been communicated to us by Comrade Betts, of Peckham, who visited the Islington branch on 1st November, that in the present instance the EC has adopted the less desperate course of inducing by the direct intervention the Peckham branch to rescind its resolution suspending propaganda. The EC has now so long wallowed in inconsistency that one more indulgence cannot materially affect its record. When cornered by Islington's unanswerable demand that Bexley branch should be caused to square its position with that laid down by the Party principles, the EC's last excuse for inaction had been that the rescindment of a resolution would imply the falsification of records. A careful perusal of “ROCKS AHEAD!” has, it appears, enabled the EC to get rid of at least this one superstition. We note the fact with pleasure, and hope to make such further progress with the political education of that body as the unfavourable character of the material to be operated on may permit. We here merely take the liberty of reminding the EC that “no matter what alterations were effected in their books, it would still remain a fact” that the Peckham branch had passed a motion conveying the information that the SPGB was unworthy of support, and declining to carry on public propaganda in its favour.

# Plight of the SPGB

It speaks volumes for the plight to which the party is reduced that the services of men with such a record of propagandist effort in their own localities should be requistioned by the EC for the purpose of endeavouring to consumate the farce of organising an Islington branch.

A semblance of legality could thereby be given to the disqualification of members of the present and regularly constituted branch.

However, we in Islington have no intention of recognising the implied disqualification, in the sense of keeping silent on matters affecting the progress of Socialism in this or any other neighbourhood. Indeed, we can assure all concerned that we will immediately take such action as may be necessary in order to demonstrate to the working class that the SPGB has become an organisation unworthy of support.

When we entered upon this struggle we did so with a determination to fight the question to a finish. We have not yet wearied of that determination. We realised at the beginning that the question of Principle involved was one on which depended the continued existence of the organisation as a revolutionary Socialist Party. We realised that any tampering with the attitude of uncompromising hostility to all other political parties would inevitably mark the beginning of the end of the period of political usefulness of the party.

We have for six months within the Party endeavoured to impress upon the membership the necessity of taking such action as would cause the party to keep straight ahead on the revolutionary course mapped out in 'Declaration of Principles'.

# The Tradition of Compromise

We have found – with regret, if not with surprise – that the tradition of weakness and compromise, which seems to cling to the Socialist movement in this country, is for the present too strong to permit of a sustained and unflinching struggle being prosecuted for the recognition and adoption of principles of Revolutionary Socialism. If the SPGB be the latest party to exemplify that weakness and to shrink from that struggle, we of the Islington branch have a duty, which we owe to our record and reputation in the Socialist movement to dissociate ourselves in the most unequivocal manner from that Party. This we shall do when our work within that Party is completed. When that time comes we shall retire from the ranks of the SPGB, impelled by the same motives as inspired us in joining. We shall retire when we find that within that Party we can no longer advance the great cause of international Socialism to which we have pledged unwavering allegiance. Whatever may be in the action of any Socialist Party in the present, we possess unshaken hope in the final triumph of that great cause. We have implicit confidence that out of the travail and misery of present-day economic conditions, and out of the mistakes and failures of present-day parties will be evolved that efficient revolutionary machine which will prove a fitting instrument for the final emancipation of our class.

Fellow members of the working class! – you who through the vicissitudes of proletarian existence have nourished freedom's faith and found comfort in the hope of the coming day! – you whose eyes are yet to be opened to the sight of the unconquerable forces that are even now preparing the way for the accomplishment of the Socialist revolution, with its unbounded possibilities for human happiness! – what though in the storm-tossed sea another bark which set out with such fair promise is added to the rudderless and compassless wrecks therein abounding! The cause, which in the midst of such confusion increases in vigour and vitality each day that passes, is surely destined to a consumation, which will be all the more glorious in that it shall triumph over perfidy within and scorn without.

Signed on behalf of the Islington branch

(42?) John Donovan, Chairman of Branch meeting

(237?) Thos. Bennett, Branch secretary

(317?) Denham Ford

(237?) Edmund J. Ford

(18?) Alfred Pilbeam

(312?) A. Craig

(471?) H. W. Pearson

(336?) George Bazin

(89?) Cornelius Lehane

(447?) Leslie Boyne

(243?) George Harris

(749?) A. Coombes

(280?) D. Rogers

(122?) J. O' Connor

(370?) G. G. Sutton

(319?) Geo. Philpott

(352?) Geo. Marshall

(138?) H. Wilson

(274?) Laura Rogers

(275?) C. Thorp

(349) G. E. Pettet

(353) F. Thiele

(84) Alfred Bull

(313) W. Tokins

Adopted by the Islington branch SPGB at its regular meeting, held on Thursday 15th November, 1906, at 79 Grove Road, Upper Holloway, London, N