Rocks Ahead!

Being the reply of the Islington Branch of the Socialist Party of Great Britain

to

The Statement

Presented by the Executive Committee

to the

Delegate Meeting

on Saturday 25th July, 1906

Issued by

The Islington Branch, S.P.G.B.,

79 Grove Road, Upper Holloway, London, N

August, 1906

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Note – a sufficient number of copies of this Pamphlet will be sent to each Branch of the S.P.G.B. To supply every Member of the Party with a copy. Members unable to obtain copies from their branch secretary can have them direct, and without charge, from the islington branch S.P.G.B., 79 grove road, upper holloway, london, n. Applicants must mention the branches to which they respectively belong, also their registered numbers.

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The Socialist Party of Great Britain.

Object

Declaration of Principles

To the members of the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

Comrades,

The Executive Committee having considered it advisable to request the Delegate meeting to take action against the Islington branch, although no charges have been formulated against it, in view of the serious nature of the issues involved, the islington branch deems it its imperative duty to call the fullest attention of every member of the organisation to the dangerous position the party now occupies.

In February 1906, the Bexley and District Branch passed a resolution to be placed on the conference agenda, couched in the following terms : –

“that the executive committee be instructed to approach the S.L.P. With a view to the union of the two parties.”

This the then executive committee ruled out of order, and refused to place on the conference agenda, and instructed the general secretary to reply to the bexley and district branch in light of the declaration of principles. In that letter it was pointed out that any proposals for arrangements, compromises, or fusion with any other party were contrary to the principles of the S.P.G.B.

On the first day of the Conference, viz, 13th April, 1906, the delegates, on the initiative of the Romford Division representative, repudiated the action of the EC in declining to place the Bexley “ fusion “ motion on the agenda, and the conference decided to place the item thereon. The only member of the conference who voted against the proposal that, the bexley resolution should be placed on the agenda was delegate from islington.

At the first meeting of the Islington branch after the conference, namely on April 23rd, the following resolution was carried and sent to the EC.

Resolved “That the Islington branch unanimously and emphatically repudiates the action of the delegates at the Second Annual Conference in discussing a motion which contemplated fusion with another party, such a motion being a direct contradiction to the Declaration of Principles of the Socialist Party of Great Britain. This Branch furthermore endorses the action of the late EC, in ruling the said motion out of order, and calls upon the EC to ignore the ultra vires' instructions of the conference to take a poll of the party on the conference findings of this motion, and moreover requests the EC to obtain from the bexley and district branch a formal withdrawal of the motion in question, if such action has not already taken”

This resolution from Islington was received by the EC on April 24th, and is quoted in extenso in the EC report to Branches, dated 28th April. On the former date the EC passed, nem con, the subjoined resolution:--

(B)”Whereas the Party Principles specify a determination to wage war against all other political parties, and whereas a resolution to instruct your EC to negociate towards the fusion of this Party with another was accepted as in order, and discussed by the delegates at the Second Annual Conference, this EC, reaffirms the decision of its predecessor that such acceptance and discussion was contrary to the Party Principles, and calls for a Referendum vote on the question. Did the Conference in accepting as to order the Bexley Resolution exceeded its powers?”

The result of the poll, which found that the conference had exceeded its powers, and which confirmed the attitude taken up by the islington branch, was declared at the EC meeting on May 15th. The report of that meeting did not reach the Islington branch until June 18th, on which date the Islington branch passed the following resolution; –

(C)”In view of the fact that a referendum of the party has declared the Bexley resolution re fusion out of order, the Islington branch desires the EC to request the Bexley branch to forthwith rescind said resolution standing on their books”

On June 26th the EC decided to send the following reply

(D)”That Islington be informed that the result of the Party poll was communicated to Bexley in common with other branches and the EC does not consider it necessary to go any further with the matter.”

This reply came as a surprise to the members of the Islington branch which as far back as April 23rd had asked the EC to obtain a withdrawal by Bexley of the “fusion” motion. When the EC called for a poll on a question which the EC should never have asked (namely, if a party is declared by its principles to be hostile to every other political party, can it at the same time discuss fusing with a party to which it is pledged to hostility), the Islington branch waited for the result of the poll, expecting that the EC would then face the issue, and request the Bexley branch either to cancel its resolution or to go outside the party. Islington was, however, disappointed to find that although the poll declared the conference out of order for merely discussing the bexley resolution, yet the EC did “not consider it necessary” to declare out of order the Bexley branch, which did more than discuss the question of fusion, for it carried a motion in favour of it.

Rule 17 states that it is the duty of the EC to carry out the resolutions adopted by general vote. If the taking of a poll has any meaning at all, it signifies the laying down of a line of action for the party, members and officers. How in this case has the EC carried out the party's decision? By simply declaring the conference out of order, and declining to deal with the branch, which according to the rulings of two executive committees, and a party referendum, had violated the declaration of principles. We in Islington believe in the declaration, but we insist upon it that every branch and member must also believe in it. Either the bexley branch understood the declaration and did not believe in it, or it neither understood nor believed in it; in either case it had no right inside the party. No member is supposed to be enrolled who does not sign the declaration, and pledge himself to the entire agreement with it. Of course, it is quite possible that members may change their minds, but in that case we say that inasmuch as no person is admitted who does not fully agree with our principles, so no member who no longer fully agrees with these same principles should be retained. There is our position. From it we will not budge a hairs-breadth. Better far that the Islington branch should cease to exist; better also that the whole organisation should tumble to pieces, rather than hold together by embarking on the slippery gradient of compromise.

Having these views in mind, and fully prepared to meet the consequences, the Islington branch, after allowing ten weeks to elapse since it first requested the EC to take steps to efface the blot placed by Bexley on the Party's Principles, and finding the EC, unwilling to do anything, sent the following communications to all branches.

(E)”Dear comrade,

I am instructed to forward you copy of the resolution unanimously passed yesterday by the Islington branch, as follows,

“In view of the criminal neglect of the EC in refusing to enforce the result of the Party referendum re Bexley resolution on fusion, by not insisting on the removal of said resolution from the books of the Bexley and District branch, resolved that the Islington branch as a protest suspends all propaganda activity pending further developments.'

“The Islington branch trusts that the members of the party will take such action as will teach all concerned that the Principles of the SPGB can neither be tampered with by a branch, nor ignored by the EC.”

Yours fraternally,

T. Bennett.

Branch Secretary”

Receipt of this communication was acknowledged by the following branches: Battersea, Peckham, West Ham. The resolution contained in above letter was also sent to the EC, which on 3rd July decided:--

(F)”That Islington branch be asked to point out wherein the EC, has been guilty of criminal neglect in carrying out their duties in any direction, and also to point out wherein the answer sent from the 10th EC meeting [June 26th] was in any way a refusal to carry out the Party's decision. Moreover it be pointed out to the Islington branch that a decision to suspend propaganda until their view is accepted is neither in accord with Party discipline, nor helpful to the cause of Socialism.”

In the resolution just quoted the EC points out “to the Islington branch that a decision to suspend propaganda until their view is accepted,” is not “in accord with Party discipline.” While we admit that it was, and is in our view that the Bexley branch, and all supporting it, should be compelled to withdraw from their disorderly position, we claim that that view was not alone ours, but also that of the organisation, as per result of poll declared by the EC on May 15th. That view was ours, also that of the EC (see document B) until May 15th, when it was endorsed by the Party. Clearly, therefore, we cannot be accused of having endeavoured to unconsitutionally force “our” views on the organisation. What we have endeavoured to do is bring pressure to bear on the EC to carry into effect the mandate of the party. We suspended our propaganda because our speakers could no longer state with truth that the SPGB held an entirely sound position. Treachery and incompetence within the ranks had effected what all the onslaughts of our external foes had failed to accomplish, and we in Islington at any rate decline to deceive the working class, which we would be doing were we to ask them to support the organisation as long as it could be said that the SPGB did not adhere to its own Principles.

Realising that the sending of resolutions, and the suspension of propaganda in Islington were not effective in demonstrating to the EC the gravity of the situation created by their neglect to deal with the Bexley branch, the Islington branch replied to the EC in the terms of the resolution quoted in the following communication sent through the Branch Secretaries to all Party members:

(G)”10th July 1906

Dear Comrades,

I am instructed to convey to you the following resolution carried at the Meeting of our branch yesterday : –

In view of the continued refusal of the EC to request the Bexley branch to rescind their resolution re fusion, resolved that the Islington branch emphasises its charge of criminal neglect against the EC, and calls on the members of the Party to take immediate steps for the removal of the present Executive, and the election of a competent administrative body”

“Please let us hear from you as to whether your Branch, or any of its members, would vote for the removal of the present EC in the event of Islington branch getting the support of five other branches so as to call for a referendum.

“Would your branch sign a requisition for a poll”

Yours fraternally,

T. Bennett, Branch secretary

Receipt of the foregoing was acknowledged by the Secretaries of the following Branches: Battersea, Tooting, Tottenham, Watford, Wood Green.

At the EC meeting on 10th July it was agreed: –

(H)That Islington be answered to the effect that, up to the present, they have failed to answer the questions propounded by the EC asking wherein the EC has been guilty of criminal neglect in the performance of any of their duties: moreover the threatened action conveyed in their (Islington's) first letter, was entirely unconstitutional, contrary in their (Islington's) first letter, was entirely unconsitutional, contrary to rule and precedent, that their present action is equally as unconsitutional as their previous one, and that no one Branch has the power to depose the EC. Therefore the EC will lay the whole matter before the next Quarterly Delegate Meeting, for their decision and Party vote.

Be it noted that the EC's final reason for laying “the whole matter” before the Delegate meeting was that the Islington branch claimed that one branch had the power to depose the EC, a claim which they describe as “unconstitutional”. Inasmuch as the Islington branch never made that claim, but on the contrary asked the support of the other branches (see concluding sentence in document G) in order that the required number of Branches, as per Rule 26, might sign a requisition for a Poll, it will readily be seen that the charge of “unconstitutional” action brought by the EC against the Islington branch has no basis. That they had committed a blunder in at least this respect seems to have dawned on the members of the EC, for in the concluding summary of the amplified statement of alleged charges against us presented to the Delegate Meeting, there is no mention of our “unconstitutional” action in claiming that “one branch has the power to depose the EC.” This is only an instance of the reckless manner in which the members of the EC, in feverish haste to escape from the “fusion” dilemma, wherein their own incompetence had landed them, struck blindly at the Islington branch.

An analysis of document H reveals a lack of that definiteness and precision which members might expect in a resolution essaying to set forth the reasons deemed of sufficient importance to form grounds for expelling a section of the party. The document states that “the threatened action,” and what is Islington's “first letter?” Islington's “first letter” re Bexley (document A) was received by the EC on April 24th, the second on June 26th (document C), the third on July 3rd (resolution contained in document E), and the fourth on July 10th. We surmise that when the EC refers to “Islington's first letter,” what is really meant is the third letter, although the “threatened action” alleged to be conveyed therein is a vain clue in endeavouring to locate the precise communcation which the EC may have had in mind. There was no threat contained in any communication from this branch. We did not “threaten” to suspend propaganda. We suspended propaganda. We did not “threaten” to remove the EC. We took the necessary steps to secure that end. There was no “threat” in either case. Apparently the EC does not see the difference between threatening to take action and taking action. We admit we have taken action, but we deny having threatened.

The “present action” having referred to by the EC is doubtless the effort of this Branch to save the party by removing an incapable executive. That this action was equally as unconsitutional as our “previous one” (suspension of branch propaganda?) we readily admit. As neither action was unconsitutional, they are, of course, “equally” so.

The constitution has been mentioned frequently, but we here assert that the principles have been flung to the winds, and the rules torn to tatters by this bungling executive. We here protest that Rule 19 has not been complied with by the EC. We protest that the safeguards adopted by the party and specified in Rule 19 have been ignored by the EC.

The consequences will recoil on their heads, not on ours.

The Executive Committee which complacently stated “it did not consider it necessary” to deal with a Branch (Bexley) which had passed a resolution which the Executive itself stated was contrary to the Declaration of Principles, was moved to immediate action against the Islington Branch, which neither the EC nor anybody else dares charge with contravention of Party principles. Why? Because the Islington branch had called on the Party Members to take steps to remove the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee was unmoved when the Party Principles were trampled on by the Bexley branch, but it was roused to action, and madly set the machinery of expulsion in motion against Islington. Why? Because Bexley merely violated the Declaration of Principle – an action which in the eyes of the EC was not worthy of even censure – but the the Islington branch perpetrated a great crime in charging the EC with neglect and incompetence. The principle of the party are no consequence, but the executive committee deems it an offence of the first magnitude to call its conduct into question.

On Monday, 23rd July, the Islington Branch received the EC statement, which contained the reasons for which the Delegate Meeting on 28th July was to be asked to take action for the expulsion of the Islington branch. Only four clear days elapsed between the date of receipt of the EC Statement by the Islington branch, and the date for which the delegate meeting was summoned, and there was no reasonable time allowed us to prepare our reply and get it into the hands of branches prior to the delegate meeting.

We will now deal with the EC statement, which omitting the resolutions already quoted in the pamphlet is as follows: –

(I) Comrades,

“probably you have received a resolution from the Islington Branch calling for the removal of the EC, and the election of a competent body to its place. You will also have seen by the EC Reports, dated June 26th and July 3rd, that the Islington branch has been asking for action to be taken with reference to Bexley Branch, and upon the EC's refusal to take such action, Islington suspended propaganda as a protest against what the branch terms 'the criminal neglect of the EC to enforce the result of the Party referendum.' When asked to substatiate this charge the Islington Branch not only refuses to give any answer to the question, but also reiterates its statement of “criminal neglect,” and asks for the removal of the EC. The EC has therefore decided to place the matter before the members for their consideration and vote thereon. The business arose out of a resolution re fusion with the SLP sent in by Bexley Branch for the agenda of the annual conference. The second EC refused to place it on the agenda, but at the conference the matter was brought up, and the delegates voted in favour of discussing the resolution. Where the third EC was considering the sending out to branches the result of the voting on the question, it was agreed that a referendum be taken as to whether the delegates were in order in discussing the resolution. On a vote the membership decided against the Delegates to the conference, and the result was sent to all the branches, in the usual way. (Here the resolutions contained in documents C, D, E, F, G, and H are quoted.)

“Apart from the fact that the Party has already settled the matter by a referendum, and that in that referendum nothing is said about callling upon Bexley to rescind their resolution, the EC would point out that the effect of the Islington resolution would simply be that of asking the Bexley branch to falsify their records, as no matter what alterations were effected in their books, it would still remain a fact that they had passed and supported such as resolution; and if Bexley are to rescind a resolution entirely because it has been defeated, then all other branches should do the same. But the chief point is that while charging the EC with criminal neglect, the Islington branch refuses to answer a question as to wherein such neglect has taken place, while on the other hand, they take it upon themselves the stopping of all propaganda is their district, a power which Rule 17 places in the hands of the EC. This itself is an act of disorganisation and anarchy.

While to make charges and refuse to prove them, by no means reflects credit on those guilty of such action. The EC therefore lays this statement before the branches so that they may instruct their delegates to the QDM, and the resolutions passed there be sent to the Branches to vote upon.

On behalf of the EC.

Yours fraternally

WM Gifford, Gen Sec

We will take first what the EC considers the “chief point” namely, that we made charges and refused to substantiate them or answer questions relating thereto. Documents E and G each contain both the charges and the proof. Both the resolutions in question were received and acknowledged by the EC. We charged the EC with criminal neglect; we emphasised the charge and supplied the proof as per texts of the resolutions in question. Was there neglect, and if so, was that neglect criminal? Obviously there was no use in a party poll declaring the Bexley resolution out of order as being contrary to the Party principles if the Bexley branch were to be allowed to retain the resolution out of order as being contrary to the Party principles if the bexley branch were to be allowed to retain the resolution uncancelled on its books. The EC never even asked the Bexley branch to put itself right by squaring its position with that of the Party principles. This was a glaring neglect on the part of the EC. When however, despite the efforts of the Islington branch which on two occasions (see documents A and C) reminded the EC concerning its duty as directed by Rule 19, the EC persists in ignoring the offence of the Bexley branch, then the neglect became culpable in the extreme and constituted a crime of omission. We of the SPGB have been in the habit of taking a particular pride in the fact that our principles were maintained at all costs, but the present EC have by their incompetence allowed the position of the Party to be betrayed, for known traitors are tolerated within the ranks.

The EC claims that the Islington branch was guilty of an act of disorganisation in suspending propaganda in Islington. If this be so, why has not Edmonton branch been charged with a simliar offence? The Edmonton branch has not held a single propaganda meeting this year. Why has not Clerkenwell Branch been dealt with for not holding propaganda meetings? This branch has not held a propaganda meeting during the whole of its existence.

What rule of the party stipulates that branches shall hold propaganda meetings at all? There is no rule dealing with this question. The EC claims that Rule 17 gives them, and them alone, the power to stop propaganda, but there is no mention of propaganda in the rule. In any case, granting the rights of the EC to institute, organise and control propaganda meetings, the islington branch has never interfered with the EC in the exercise of those rights. The EC can hold as many meetings as it likes, anywhere, and at any time, and the Islington branch will not try and stop them. All the Islington branch has decided to do is suspend its own voluntary activities. The functions of the branch, as prescribed by the rules, have in no way ceased. The EC cannot charge any speaker with an act of disorganisation should such speaker, as a few have already done, cease to act as a speaker. Whether a member shall continue to act as speaker is, other things being equal, entirely a matter for that member to decide. Why? Because propagandist activities are purely voluntary. What holds good in the case of the individual member holds good in the case of the Branch. A member is required by rule to pay dues, unless he can show satisfactory reasons to the contrary, but no member is required to speak at propaganda meetings. A member is not even required to even attend Branch business meetings. Branches are required to pay dues, but no branch is required to hold propaganda meetings. Edmonton and Clerkenwell know this very well. Islington knows it also. But the EC apparently does not.

The EC states the suspension of Islington's voluntary activities as regards propaganda is an act of anarchy.

Without disputing that the present EC may be considered an authority on the subject of Anarchism if not on Socialism, we would point out that an EC which takes a poll of the party to ascertain if the declaration of principles really means what it says, and then allows a branch to retain on its books a motion which two EC's and one party poll have declared in conflict with that declaration, is apparently out of place in a socialist organisation, islington was insisting that the bexley branch should be disciplined and the EC charge Islington with anarchy. We are sorry for the EC.

In connection with this wild charge of anarchy, we would ask the members of the SPGB to bear in mind that the Islington propaganda was this year in no way assisted by the EC. We in Islington undertook the self-imposed task of organising five open-air meetings per week, and this we did without requiring any aid other than the voluntary efforts of our own members. If there is any meaning in the EC contention that when, in a final effort to rivet the attention of the party to the grave danger in which we deemed the party to be, the islington branch suspended its propaganda operations, then it follows that the islington branch was guilty of an act of anarchy when it initiated those activities. Why did not the EC charge us with anarchy when of our own accord, providing our own speaker for every meeting, and publishing our own advertising matter, we started propaganda in Islington this year? Obviously if it was an act of “anarchy” on the part of the Islington branch to “stop” propaganda, it was equally, an act of “anarchy” to commence it. If, then, we were anarchists in organising the Islington meetings, the EC should have been gratified to find that our anarchism had subsided with the cessation of our propaganda efforts. Instead of which they charge us with an act of anarchy when we ceased doing what, according to the EC, we had no right to do. Verily the ways of the EC are difficult of comprehension.

We have no doubt, however, that every member of the party with an elementary knowledge of the significance of terms, will see that the EC has couched its random statements in very extravagant language.

The EC alleges that the result of the party poll was “communicated to Bexley in common with other branches” (see document D), and again that it was “sent to all branches in the usual way” (see document I). This is an entire evasion of the issue. Bexley branch passes a resolution which is admitted by the EC to be “contrary to the Party principles” (see document B), and which a poll of the party declares to be outside the pale of even discussion. How does the EC deal with the Bexley branch? By sending a statement to bexley “in common with other branches” that they had violated the Declaration of Principles. Nothing more was considered necessary by the EC! So that branches may violate the Declaration of Principles as often as they like, the EC will take a poll to find out whether the violations have really taken place, and when assured by the poll that the principles have been broken, the EC will communicate the result to all branches in the usual way! The Branches found guilt of breach of Principles are to be treated in the “usual way” by being simply told “in common with other branches” that they have violated the party principles, and any branch which asks that the guilty branches be dealt with will be told that “the EC does not consider it necessary to go any further with the matter!” (see document D).

We will now touch on the point raised by the EC that the effect of the Islington resolution asking the EC to request Bexley to rescind their resolution, “would simply be that of asking Bexley branch to falsify their records.” Is this seriously meant as an argument? If it is, then it is most remarkable that the EC has previously forced at least one Branch to falsify their records, if to use the EC's definition of the word, to rescind a motion is to falsify records. We quote the following from the EC report to branches, dated November 11, 1905:--

“Jackson moved, 'That the Tottenham branch be requested to rescind their resolution debarring him from speaking on their platform.' Neumann seconded. Carried by 6 votes to 2”.

If the EC thought that the rescinding of the Bexley resolution would simply be the falsification of records, “as no matter what alterations were effected in their books, it would still remain a fact that they had passed and supported such a resolution,” why did not the previous EC rule similarly in the case of the Tottenham branch, “as no matter what the alterations were effected in their books, it would still remain a fact, etc” The EC's argument re falsifying records is simply a childish quibble. The EC knows very well the significance of rescindment of a resolution. Has the EC ever rescinded any of its own resolutions? It has on several occasions. We will quote their own communcations for proof: –

“Deciding to rescind resolution accepting resignation of E.J.B. Allen [See EC report of Meeting held on January 9th, 1906]

That Islington be informed that No 22 The Socialist Standard was delayed in issue owing to the fact that at an EC meeting held on the 29th alt, it was decided to rescind a resolution passed the previous meeting, to insert a three column instalment of report of Trade unionism discussion, thus leaving the paper at a late date without the necessary at a late date without the necessary matter being ready.”

[Letter dated 30th June 1906, from General Secretary to the Islington branch.]

A former executive rescinded its own resolutions, and “falsified” its books, and insisted on the Tottenham branch rescinding the resolution it passed on September 20th 1905, thereby “falsifying” the Tottenham branch books, the present EC rescinds its resolution to insert in the official organ of the Party certain literary matter previously proposed and accepted by resolution to insert in the official organ of the Party certain literary matter previously proposed and accepted by resolution of the EC for inclusion therein. Were the books of the EC thereby falsified?

We would like to call attention to another point. The second sentence in the EC statement to the Delegate meeting commences by saying, “You will also have seen by the EC reports dated June 26th and July 3rd that the islington branch has been asking for action to be taken with reference to Bexley branch, but we would refer the members to the EC report dated 28th April (see document A), from which it will be observed that the Islington Branch had been asking for action to be taken since 23rd April that is two months farther back than the memory of the EC appears to extend.

In the statement under consideration the EC further puts forward in justification of their refusal to accede to Islington's reiterated request “that if Bexley are to rescind a resolution merely because it has been defeated, then all other branches should do the same.” What are we to think of the calibre of the deliberative body which seriously advances this as a reason for their inaction to the matter under consideration? We should think that, at the present time, the merest tyro in deliberative work of any kind should recognise the distinction in procedure and effect, between a resolution having on the one hand been defeated, and on the other declared out of order. The EC has made desperate and unsuccessful efforts to explain certain inexplicable courses of action. Perhaps its collective wisdom would be equal to the task of giving a plausible explanation as to how a resolution – which in the most decisive and emphatic manner possible had been declared out of order, and so on which was therefore impossible to vote – could have possibly been defeated.

The members of the party will readily recognise the ridiculous and untenable nature of the argument here put forward by the EC and must further realise that the mere fact of the EC finding it necessary to adopt such clumsy methods of burking the issue raised by this branch, shows the desperate straits to which that body is reduced, by the call to “halt” in the downward path which has now gone out to the movement from islington.

Bearing on this phase of the question, we would impress on our Comrades that the paltry nature of the expedients resorted to by the EC must be regarded as constituting an exact measure of that body's appreciation of the intelligence of the members of the party. But while pettifogging stupidity, clumsy shuffling, and inartistic wobbling are relied on by the EC to defend their failure to enforce the Party rules, and keep inviolate the Party's declaration of Principles, we, on the contrary, have no hesitation in placing, clearly and unequivocally, our position on this matter before the party, and thereby appealing to the enlightened honesty and devotion to principles of our comrades in this movement, to stand by us in this our effort to rescue the party from the desperate plight to which incompetence has now reduced it.

Throughout these pages we have closely kept to the issue between the EC and this branch. In doing so, we have studiously refrained from giving expression to any sentiment which can possibly be regarded as being either personal or offensive. For the credit of our Party and the dignity of the Socialist movement, we regret that a like courtesy has not been extended to some individuals in our branch by certain prominent members of the executive.

Again so convinced are we of the absolute correctness of the position we originally took up, so assured are we now of its fundamental soundness, so impressed by the irrefutable logic with which it is defended, that we have not sought to strengthen it by reference in detail to later developments within the bexley branch, since that branch's infidelity to the declaration of principles had been condoned by the EC.

However we can claim, in passing, that events have proved that the Islington branch had a clearer conception of the danger to the movement then imminent, than had the EC. As we have already seen (vide the EC report, June 26th) the EC did not then consider it necessary to go any further in that matter than to communicate “in the usual way” to the Bexley branch the mere detail that a poll of the party had declared that branch to have violated the declaration of principles on which this party was founded. By noting the drastic nature of the punishment here meted out to the Bexley branch, the members of this party can see therein that Branch's justification for all its subsequent actions. With that subsequent action we are not particularly concerned here and now, as we have no intention of following the bad example of the EC in confusing the issue by any more detailed reference thereto.

We have dealt with the statement regarding Islington branch submitted to the EC to the DM of July 28th; we claim to have pulverised every argument, or substitute for argument, contained therein; we claim that if the English language has any definite meaning, the “chief point” in the alleged indictment was met when the original charge was made; and finally, we submit that sufficient evidence has been adduced by us to convict the EC of incompetence; of begging the whole question; of playing with the trust that has been reposed in them, and of grossly insulting the intelligence of the members of the Party to whom they appeal for support.

When we first took our stand on this question, we were fully aware of the difficulties which confronted us. By our original resolution on the question we tested the EC's attitude towards the principles of the party. We are now not surprised at the inability or reluctance of the EC to face the question of principle involved, as consequences decidedly unpleasant to some well-known members of the Party may ensue.

Bexley is not the only place within this party where treachery has been tolerated, and compromise has reared its head!

As we could not succeed in getting the EC to take such action as the gravity of the situation then demanded such action as the gravity of the situation then demanded we now appeal to the membership of this Party to keep steadily before them the real issue involved in this struggle. We claim that said issue is that the Declaration of Principles on which the Party is founded, and all thereby involved , shall be rigidly adhered to in the case of every member, and every branch of the party, and that such adherence shall be invariably and impartially enforced by the administrative body of the organisation. Further, as no charge either of breach of rules, or disloyalty to principle has been, or could have been proved against this Branch, we claim that it is the EC and its conduct of the organisation that is now arraigned before the Party. We have shown that while we charged the EC with condoning open treachery within the ranks of the party, their defence has been a mere tissue of quibbling inconsistencies, ridiculous subterfuges, and transparent humbug, as would do credit to a broken-down police court lawyer, but which is a positive disgrace to a body claiming to be democratice, and abusing the title Socialist.

Comrades, previous to the formation of this Party, we saw the disastrous plight to which the cause of Socialism was reduced in this country. We saw that in every country in the world cursed by the presence of the capitalist system of wealth production, there erect, and defiant, was springing up side by side with that system, a militant and determined Socialist Party, seeking by political action the political and industrial emancipation of the working class. Of all the great industrial nations of the world, Britain alone took no proper part in the marshalling of forces for the final struggle for the overthrow of the capitalist system, for which the organised proletariat of the world is now preparing.

To anybody acquainted with the recent history of the working class movement in this country, a reason for this lamentable state of affairs is not far to seek. In every working-class organisation hitherto founded in this country, cowardice and compromise have been allowed to creep in; self advertising and quackery took the place of devotion to principle, and the spread of scientific education, with the inevitable consequence that organisations which should have been a tower of strength to the working-class have degenerated into a source of confusion, disorganisation and weakness.

This process had been at work unchecked until the formation of this Party, under circumstances which are, no doubt fresh in the minds of many members. We have in the Party founded on the Declaration of Principles held by the SPGB, such a rallying point round which we may centre the political energies of the working-class, such a training ground where these energies may be directed and disciplined, such a field whereon can be marshalled the forces that make for the emancipation of our class, as has never previously been afforded in the history of this country.

This Party having been constituted for the purpose of effecting the political and economic emancipation of the working-class, must of necessity exist as the political expression of the diametrically opposed interests of the working-class and master class, and in entering the political field as the champion of working-class interests must of necessity adopt an attitude of unvarying and uncompromising hostility to every other Party, either now in existence or in future to be formed. Any other basis of organisation and policy is impossible in the cause of a militant working-class political party, and in view of the interests involved, and the necessity of giving the working-class a straight policy directed along the lines of the social revolution by class-conscious political action, any departure in whatever degree from our basic principle of hostility, or any step which would open the way to such departure, must be fatal to the influence and prestige, the very life and continued existence of the Party.

Whatever measure of success has attended our party, and we in Islington have reason to be satisfied with the result of our labours, has been due to clearness of the issue presented to the members of the working-class by the SPGB in contradistinction to the shuffling and confusion-mongering of the other parties claiming to be Socialist. The clearness of issue must inevitably disappear if the basic principle of uncompromising hostility which determines that clearness be swerved from in the least particular.

This danger now confronts the party, and, if not met by prompt and efficient action, must inevitably lead to the disastrous results which have attended the lack of adherence to principle, of scientific organisation and direction – the taint of treachery, the curse of compromise, and the conscious or unconscious betrayal of the working-class position – by every political organisation of labour hitherto formed.

Comrades of the Socialist Party of Great Britain! You who founded our fighting organisation, and you who since have mustered under its banner, all you who still possess unshakeable faith in those principles enunciated on June 12th, 1904! You who are still prepared to carry on the war against all other political parties without exception, neither asking you to granting quarter! The issue is now before you. It rests with you to decide whether through the machinations of a few disaffected members, coupled with the neglect of your central administration, the vessel which you launched two years ago is to terminate its journey on the rock of disaster; or whether, heeding the note of warning, you will resolutely set to work of cleansing the organisation from the elements of incipient rottenness recently imported into our Party by the tools of an unscrupulous and despicable faction.

Signed on behalf of Islington branch,

1. John Donovan

(237) Thos. Bennett

(312) A. Craig

(252) E. J. Ford

(327) Denham Ford

(359) Geo. Philpott

(225) Charles Thorp

(330) George Bazin

(351) Fred Thiele

(80) Cornelius Lehane

(171) H. W. Pearson

(280) D. Rogers

(349) A. Coobes

(275) P. J. Harkin

(350) G. Marshall

(285) W. Wicks

(284) A. Bull

(120) R. Triggs

(98) A. Pilbeam

(177) F. Satoe

(293) George Harris

(313) W. Tokins

(225) J. O'Connor

(370) G. G. Sutton

(249) G. E. Pettet

(338) H. Wilson

Adopted unanimously by the Islington branch, SPGB, at its regular meeting on Monday 30th July, 1906

Object

Declaration of Principles

Read the Socialist standard , the official organ of the Socialist Party of Great Britain

Monthly, one penny