

Emergency Motion Date: 13 October 2020
Emergency Motion Title: Opposing the Spycops Bill

This Branch This branch expresses its horror at the proposals outlined in the Covert Human Intelligence Sources (Criminal Conduct) Bill, which the UK government is rushing into law¹.

This legislation “offers astounding scope” for the state to commit criminal activity under the auspices of maintaining law and order, and “Most alarmingly, it does not rule out murder, torture or sexual offences ... [whereas] Other countries – including Canada and the US – spell out the limits for those operating undercover.” (The Guardian²)

This Branch further abhors the lack of opposition to the Bill by the Parliamentary Labour Party which originally instructed MPs to abstain from the vote at the second reading. Kier Starmer has since said that “the Labour Party should not vote down the so-called ‘spycops’ bill – even if the opposition party’s amendments are not approved during its passage ... [although] he is willing to vote against at third reading if it is not amended.” (Labour List³). This approach utterly fails to signal both to government and the wider community the dangers inherent in the Bill.

Our members congratulate the 20 Labour MPs who defied the whip and voted in opposition to the Bill.

This Branch calls on Unite to:

- Continue to use its own campaigning resources and work with campaign groups to highlight that the powers encapsulated within this Bill represent a fundamental threat to Civil Liberties;
- Offer full support to Labour MPs who oppose this Bill, even if this means defying the whip;
- Use the Labour Link to change its policy and oppose the green light for human rights abuses by the state; and
- Consider diverting funding from the Labour Party to human rights and civil liberties campaign groups if the party does not change its policy in relation to the Bill.

¹ <https://services.parliament.uk/bills/2019-21/coverthumanintelligencesourcescriminalconduct.html>

² <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/oct/11/the-guardian-view-on-covert-human-intelligence-sources-draw-a-line>

³ <https://labourlist.org/2020/10/exclusive-starmer-says-labour-should-not-vote-down-spycops-bill-even-if-unamended/>
