

A Hugely Controversial Chapter in the History of Political Policing in the UK

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#Spycops: Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament General Secretary Shares Disturbing State Surveillance and Human Rights Abuses



Today, Monday 15 July 2024, the General Secretary of the [Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament \(CND\)](#), Kate Hudson, has given evidence to the Undercover Policing Inquiry (UCPI). Kate has instructed Paul

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The most explicit example of subverting parliamentary democracy uncovered so far

On behalf of CND, PILC has submitted our [Opening Statement](#) to the UCPI in Tranche 2 Phase 1. In it, we state a clear and deeply alarming use of political undercover policing by the then Conservative government.

We revealed evidence that MI5's scrutiny of CND was motivated by CND's influence on public opinion and its potential effects on electoral politics. We outlined that SDS and MI5 provided information about CND members to the then minister of defence, Michael Heseltine, and his DS19 unit. This unit was specifically established and tasked with discrediting the peace movement.

The information provided by the SDS was then used by the Conservative party to undermine opponents in marginal constituencies during the 1983 general election.

This instance of using undercover intelligence to manipulate election outcomes is the most explicit example of subverting parliamentary democracy uncovered so far.

British state surveillance intensified as support grew

The infiltration of CND by undercover police and security services remains a hugely controversial chapter in the history of political policing in the UK.

A prominent voice in campaigning for global peace and the elimination of nuclear weapons, the CND was established in 1958. The organisation has championed disarmament and non-violence, drawing support from a wide range of individuals and groups.

As the CND gained widespread mass support and challenged government policies, British state surveillance on the organisation intensified.

However, its prominence and influence have also made it a target for scrutiny and infiltration by state security services, Special Branch and the political policing unit known as the Special Demonstration Squad (SDS).

Infiltrated by political police

Units operating under the guidance of MI5 and other security services aimed to gather intelligence on groups seen as subversive or as posing a so-called threat to national security.

However, the methods and extent of these operations often crossed ethical lines, leading to significant breaches of trust and human rights.

This infiltration raises not only significant human rights concerns, but also why British state agencies and key government individuals sought to infiltrate CND in the first place.

The key undercover officers who infiltrated CND

HN65 'John Kerry': infiltrated Hampstead CND and became one of the key leaders of the group. His operations included monitoring CND activities,

contributing to the broader intelligence-gathering efforts against the organisation, such as attending London Regional Council and forwarding discreet intelligence about the legitimate campaigning organisation. His actions have raised questions about not only the proportionality and justification of such surveillance, but also that this information was passed onto then minister of defence Michael Heseltine, who used it directly in the 1983 General Election.

HN88 'Timothy Spence': was an undercover officer who engaged in deep cover operations targeting CND and similar groups. Spence's work often involved cultivating close relationships with activists to gather detailed intelligence.

HN33 'Lee Bonser': her infiltration efforts focused on the CND and related organisations specifically the women's peace camp at Greenham Common. Her role in these operations was requested by Special Branch at the request of then prime minister Margaret Thatcher.

The Role of MI5 and Security Services: MI5, the United Kingdom's domestic counter-intelligence and security agency, played a significant role in orchestrating the infiltration of political groups. They claimed that the agency's collaboration with undercover police units, specifically the SDS, aimed to safeguard national security. However, the safeguarding was of the establishment itself, rather than that of national security.

Cathy Massiter and the Whistleblower Revelations: Cathy Massiter was a former MI5 officer. She became a whistleblower in the 1980s, revealing the extent of surveillance on CND and other activist groups. Her disclosure as part of the documentary *20/20 Vision* highlighted the pervasive monitoring of lawful, peaceful protest organisations. This sparked public

outcry and calls for greater transparency and accountability in the operations of security services.

[Read the CND's statement here.](#)

[Watch Kate's evidence here.](#)

The [Undercover Policing Inquiry \(UCPI\)](#) was established to investigate the actions of undercover police officers who infiltrated various protest and activist groups from 1968 onwards. The inquiry aims to uncover the extent and impact of these operations, focusing on issues of legality, ethics, and the violation of human rights.

As the inquiry continues, we're served crucial reminders of the ways that establishment used the agencies of the state not for the purposes of defending civil liberties, but to defend the interest of the establishment and the ruling class.

PILC is working hard to shed light on these practices, and to challenge the systemic injustices that took place. The revelations by members of the CND show the need for greater oversight and accountability in the operations of state security agencies.

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