



# Political Policing and Democracy: The Undercover Policing Inquiry and the Fight for Accountability

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The Public Interest Law Centre (PILC) recently represented three core participants in Tranche 2 Part 1 of the [Undercover Policing Inquiry](#) (UCPI): the [Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament](#) (CND), represented by its General Secretary Kate Hudson; Michael Chant of the [Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain \(Marxist-Leninist\)](#) (RCPB-ML); and Lindsey German, current convenor of the [Stop the War Coalition](#) and former a leading member of the Socialist Workers Party.

Tranche 2 Part 1 of the UCPI covers the period from 1983 to 1992. It focuses on the actions of the Special Demonstration Squad (SDS) during this time,

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examining how undercover officers infiltrated political and activist groups.

The UCPI investigates the covert surveillance of political parties, trade unions and campaign groups by the British state, revealing disturbing practices of political policing that have undermined civil liberties, democracy, the right to organise and campaign.

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## What is the UCPI?

The UCPI was established in 2015 to scrutinise the actions of undercover police officers, particularly the Special Demonstration Squad (SDS) and the National Public Order Intelligence Unit (NPOIU), which infiltrated numerous political organisations. These undercover officers (UCO) were embedded within groups like CND, the RCPB-ML, and the Socialist Workers Party, often for extended periods. The inquiry has uncovered that SDS operations went far beyond standard policing, veering into the realm of political repression and interference.

## What is Political Policing?

Political policing, as practiced by the British state, involved targeting left-wing, progressive, and activist groups that posed no real threat to public safety but instead challenged prevailing political and economic structures. The groups represented by the PILC were all engaged in legitimate political activities: CND campaigned against nuclear weapons; the RCPB-ML advocated Marxist-Leninist ideas; and the Socialist Workers Party promoted socialist ideals. Despite this, UCOs were deployed to infiltrate and even destabilise these organisations.

The inquiry has heard evidence of how undercover officers acted to undermine the effectiveness and cohesion of these groups. In some cases, UCOs formed intimate relationships with members, misled activists about their identities, and provided misleading or

manipulative information, all in a bid to weaken the organisations from within. These tactics were not just a matter of gathering intelligence—they were aimed at disrupting political dissent.

Political policing represents a fundamental threat to democracy. In a democratic society, individuals and groups must be free to express their views, organise politically, and challenge the state without fear of surveillance or sabotage. The UCPI has shone some light on how the British state's covert actions violated these basic principles, raising urgent questions about accountability, civil rights, and the proper limits of state power.

## **Submissions to Tranche 2 Part 1 of the UCPI**

### **Opening Statement from the PILC Legal Team. (James Scobie KC)**

On behalf of our clients James Scobie KC delivered our opening statement at Tranche 2 of the Undercover Policing Inquiry (UCPI) on 2 July 2024. The opening addressed several key issues, including the challenges faced by non-state participants due to late disclosure of critical documents, which hindered their full participation in this phase of the inquiry. CND faced significant surveillance, which we argued was driven by its influence on public opinion, especially in challenging government policies. We alleged that the political policing of CND was sanctioned by the then

Conservative Government to assist them win the 1983 General Election.

In the case of the SWP, it continued to be infiltrated by the SDS at the behest of MI5 and at high levels within the Party. They continued to collect detailed information on internal conflicts and strategic decisions, which was reported to the Security Services.

You can watch James Scobie deliver our opening [here](#). Our written opening statement can be viewed [here](#).

### **Our Core Participants gave evidence**

**Michael Chant**, representing the RCPB(ML) gave evidence to Tranche 2 of the UCPI on **July 10, 2024**. His testimony focused on the infiltration and disruption of his organisation by UCOs during the period covered by the tranche. It was infiltrated by 'Malcolm Shearing' cover name of officer HN19. His evidence can be viewed [here](#).

**Kate Hudson**, the General Secretary of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), gave evidence to the Undercover Policing Inquiry (UCPI) during Tranche 2 on July 15, 2024.

Kate's testimony focused on the extensive infiltration and surveillance of CND by undercover police officers, which was part of the broader political policing efforts targeting left-wing and activist organisations.

At this stage we definitely know that CND was infiltrated by 'John Kerry', 'Lee Bonser' and 'Timothy Spence.' We can only assume multiple officers and security service agents infiltrated and monitored the organisation. Her evidence can be viewed [here](#).

Finally, **Lindsey German**, formerly a leading member of the SWP, gave evidence on **July 11, 2024**. Her testimony focused on the infiltration of the SWP by

undercover officers and the impact this had on the organisation and its political activities – particular evidence focused on spurious allegations from UCOs further to the demonstration against the BNP at Welling in south London.

Her evidence can be viewed [here](#).

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