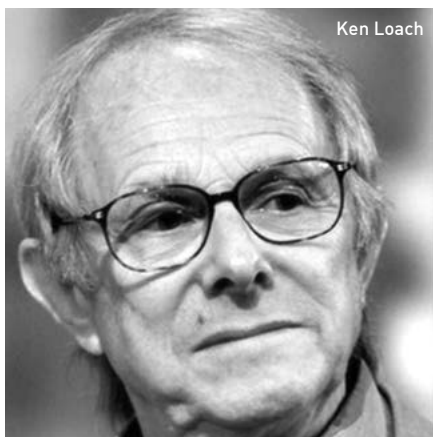


# A LETTER FROM KEN LOACH

We reprint below a letter from **Ken Loach** to Labour Party General Secretary, David Evans. Ken has received no reply



Dear General Secretary,

## Bath CLP and the Regional Office

I am an ordinary member of Bath Labour Party. I attend most CLP and ward meetings. The events of recent months are unlike anything I have witnessed during many years in the Labour Party and in my trade union.

Bath CLP has a properly constituted Executive Committee and officers elected in accordance with party rules. The CLP has been subject to a hostile campaign from the regional officers of non-co-operation, harassment and intimidation that has made it impossible to maintain our premises safely or to pursue important political work, to the detriment of the party locally and nationally.

The most egregious examples of this destructive behaviour are as follows:

1. Suspension of the AGM by the regional officers. This paralysed all activity and prevented our carrying out essential safety work to the offices, some of which was required by law. No reason was given. We were told our AGM would be held in February. We are still waiting. No explanation or apology.

2. A Special General Meeting was scheduled by the CLP's Executive Committee on 15th March to pass an emergency budget to deal with statutory obligations. On the day of the meeting, an instruction from the regional officers was

received to say that the only decision the meeting could take was to provide funds for the mayoral election. The budget itself could not be passed.

This is plainly unacceptable. It would be irresponsible to allocate funds without an overall budget.

The reasons given for the cancellation refer darkly to "considerable correspondence... expressing strong concerns from other members." This is not good enough. What concerns? Meetings have been held in an open and tolerant manner, even in the difficult conditions of the pandemic. No one has been prevented from speaking. The limits on what can be discussed have come from the regional officers. Can you imagine an NEC meeting being cancelled on such flimsy grounds?

The above quotation suggests some CLP members are colluding with regional officers to disrupt the activities of the entire CLP. As an ordinary member, I want to know who is doing this, on what grounds, and why do they have this privileged access?

3. There is little or no communication from the regional officers to the Executive Committee or its officers. There is no assistance, support or any help whatsoever. Emails are not answered. No explanations, just occasional diktats.

4. Motions for CLP meetings have been ruled out of order by regional officers with either inadequate or no reasons given. The content of these motions would always have been the common currency of party debate. One motion that was accepted noted Orwell's contribution to our understanding of political struggle and the obstacles placed in the way of serious change. The irony presumably escaped the regional officers.

5. At the time of writing, the Executive Committee has been prevented from communicating with party members. Regional officers have cut the link to 'Organise', the Labour Party's computer facility for this purpose. Again, no discussion and no consultation. What is the authority for this intentional disruption?

## General Points

In any competently managed organisation, this ludicrous behaviour would not have been allowed to continue. The inefficiency of the Labour Party is nothing new, it has regularly failed its members. But these actions suggest a conscious attempt to destroy a CLP leadership that was functioning well, carefully following rules, with a positive determination to attack the local Tory and Liberal establishment.

I have watched good people coming into politics with enthusiasm and commitment, worn down and broken by this malicious undermining of their work. Their time and energy, freely given, was wasted. Among members generally, there are feelings of disillusion and cynicism towards the party, both locally and nationally. If this is how we are treated, why bother? The Labour Party is seen as a useless, self-serving clique, a waste of time for those who really want to make a difference.

But some of us with a long experience of the party know what is happening. Regional officers could not behave in this way without approval from the top. There is a clear determination to drive out anyone who showed support for Corbyn and McDonnell's programme of radical change. We know of other CLPs in our situation, unable to function, reduced to chaos because of bureaucratic intervention. How many have left the party, 60,000? If it's not 70,000 yet, it soon will be. Imagine the outcry if Labour had lost so many members under Corbyn's leadership.

The aim of the current leaders would seem to be to have a small, tightly disciplined party, with few troublesome activists, where policy is endorsed by a docile conference - standing ovations and little discussion. Leaders are then not accountable to members, but speak to the voters directly through a media that welcomes a Labour Party that will make no substantial changes to the established order.

This may be your party, David Evans and Keir Starmer, it is not ours.

**Ken Loach, 30th April 2021**

## Ken's post-election addendum

These attacks on Labour members by the party bureaucrats are not news to most of us, yet ignored by the media, anxious as ever to protect Starmer. But his inept failure in these elections puts him under scrutiny. He must also be answerable for his brazen assault on party democracy.