

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### “Labour (dis)united. Disputed legitimacies within the British labour movement”

Monday 4 April 2016, People’s History Museum, Manchester

*The conference, organised by the Centre for Research on the English-speaking World (CREW, Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3 University), is sponsored by the Society for the Study of Labour History (SSLH) and the Labour Movements Group of the Political Studies Association (PSA).*

This conference aims to bring together historical and contemporary perspectives on the study of the British labour movement, from the point of view of the tensions that have, time and again, challenged it, if not fractured it, from the inside.

The study of labour organisations as such has sometimes been criticised as too institutional. Yet the organisers of the conference believe that the turn towards a “new labour history” in the 1960s–1970s and a “global labour history” since the 2000s, far from making the study of organisations outdated, has continuously generated, and will continue to generate, innovative research on traditional topics such as: the Labour Party, the CPGB, trade unions, the Co-operative movement, friendly societies, etc.

The focus on internal dissensions seems a particularly enticing avenue of investigation, precluding any celebration of a linear and consensual “forward march of Labour”.

The “disputed legitimacies” evoked in the title of the conference could be analysed on three different levels:

- At a first level, *intra-organisational* tensions, i.e. tensions specific to each type of organisation (for example the divergences between leaders and members of the Labour Party during the New Labour experiment, or the strife between trade union officials and rank-and-file members in times of industrial action).
- At a second level, *inter-organisational* tensions, i.e. tensions between different types of organisations (disputes between trade unionists and Labour Party governments are the obvious example here, but surely not the only case worthy of examination).
- At a third level, tensions between labour organisations and spontaneous working-class protests, where new modes of organising may emerge.

Of course the distinction between these three levels is seldom so clear-cut, and papers emphasising the intricacies and complexities of such situations will be especially welcome, whether they use the tools of social history, political science, sociology, anthropology, or a combination of those approaches.

Conflicts of legitimacy within the labour movement have repeatedly raised the issue of who can claim to speak on behalf of labour organisations and working-class people. This two-day conference will hopefully allow us to identify more clearly and from new perspectives long-term convergences and divergences in terms of both organisational structures and decision-making processes.

**The abstracts (and short bio-bibliographies) should be sent to both organisers by 31 October 2015:**

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*A selection of the papers will be published either as an edited volume or as a journal issue.*

**Scientific committee:**

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