***From Young Socialists to Young Labour: the changing face of left-wing youth politics in Britain***

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**Abstract**

The Labour youth section was for many years a bastion of radicalism and idealism within the Party. In the 1980s, for example, the Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS) was dominated by supporters of Militant, a Trotskyist organization which engaged in entryism within Labour. The LPYS was a constant thorn in the side of the adult party, publicly criticizing its moderation and opposing its drift to the right in the internal structures of the Party. Yet, by the turn of the century, the LPYS had become Young Labour and was a staunch supporter of the Blair government.

This paper aims to examine how and why this change took place, linking it to the broader evolution of the Labour Party and to the difficulties of left-wing parties in general, whether of the moderate or the extreme left, to attract and integrate young people. It will study the changing nature of youth activism in Britain, noting the decline of binding commitments to political parties and the rise of more informal, occasional activity, such as opposition to the war in Iraq or support for Love Music Hate Racism, and of participation in non-party organizations including Friends of the Earth.

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