

Minutes of Left Unity TNC Sunday 1 6th March 2014

Agree Merry C and Bianca T chair the meeting.

Attendance: Terry C DES, Merry C DES, Felicity D DES, Oliver N Acting Tu officer Bianca T DES, Tom W DES, , Dominic A Milton Keynes, Toby A Greenwich & Lewisham, Tom A Manchester Central/South, Anna B Brighton and Hove, Anna B Bristol, Matthew C Leeds N & E, Laura C Liverpool, Jon D Cambridge, Geoff H Huddersfield, Andy H Cardiff, Ally MacG Leamington, Pete McC Rugby, Sharon McC Birmingham, Andy M Worcestershire, Shelia M Leicester, Mike S Nottingham, Terry S Hackney, Dave S Lambeth, Alan S Nottinghamshire, Roland R Waltham Forest, Alison T Stockport, Tony W West London,

Observers: Mark F Worcestershire, Mark L Swansea, Eve T West London, Steve W Manchester S,

Apologies were received from

Andrew B DES, Crouch End LU, Pete G APS, Stephen H (Wigan), Guy H DES, Kate H DES, Chris H DES, Islington LU, Stephen M (Northampton), Tim N ATUO

1. A minutes silence was observed in memory of Bob Crow and Tony Benn
2. A message of support was sent to Stephen H who had been hurt at Barton Moss Fracking protest
3. **Minutes of previous meeting.** The following amendments and addendums were agreed.

Agree to add the names of Ally Mc G and Ollie N to the attendance

Also noted that Ally had complained that the agenda had not been circulated in time

It was noted after discussion that not all points of view were minuted

It was noted that the branches report did not contain the list of new branches and requested that these be added.

Terry S requested that minutes be available in VI friendly formats eg large print versions

Terry C indicated that minutes on the web would also be made available in accessible formats ie in word so they could be read by screen readers which pdfs could not.

These points were agreed

4. Agreed that Minutes as amended were a true record
5. Ollie N moved that minutes record decisions and action points not points of view. Agreed
6. Matters arising from the minutes

Alison T asked whether branches are notified when new members joined in their areas. Terry C clarified that new members were advised that they should contact their nearest branch. Branches could ask for updated lists from membership@leftunity.org but we don't have the resources to send these out without requests

7. Officers and campaign reports

8A Tom W

People's assembly

Tom commented on how delegation operated. He asked for more cooperation and joint action at future delegations. Agreed

Tom will write an article for the website
Agreed on need for delegations to caucus
8B Report back from ATOS campaign

Mark F asked for report backs Worcester Manchester West Ealing Leicester Birmingham London Nottingham Chester Reading Newham Nottingham all had events or shared in events on that day.
Overall a very good first attempt at coordinated campaigning

8C Felicity D

Euro elections in the North west where fascists have an MEP position. Since Christmas there had been a discussion on the website of the issues involved
Felicity had met with Peter Cranie from the Green Party
At the regional meeting in Wigan where 27 people attended a resolution was agreed and this was sent to Peter Cranie who replied
(Dear Peter
Left Unity's meeting last Sunday had a thorough discussion on the Euro elections
The figures from the previous election were discussed and the dire need to defeat the fascist was a major concern.

The final resolution noted that

"Peter Cranie is a committed Anti-fascist and trade unionist. Left Unity will be campaigning in this election on Anti fascism and anti austerity policies (which are designed to destroy the social and economic gains working people have made over many decades).

*We ask Peter for public endorsement of these two policies at which point we can give a public endorsement of his candidacy. **[Very happy to do this]***

*We also ask Peter if he wins the seat to be a point of assistance to workers in struggle in the North West who might need the assistance of an MEP **[Yes - I'd like a NW Trade Union Council meeting regularly]***

*This does not mean we unconditionally support the Green party nor would it mean that Peter unconditionally support Left Unity policies." [Agreed - **we could perhaps add, "but we will work together on common interests such as ejecting a racist politician from the European Parliament"**]*

Report was endorsed.

8D Bianca T reported on principal speaker's work

Guardian article on day E. Milliband changed relationships between labour and the Trade Unions
<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/mar/03/labour-party-unions-left-unity-ed-miliband>

Bianca's article had a good reception. New people applied to join. There were 572 comments in the comment is free section.

Bianca had spoken at different meetings and campaigns around the country

Principal speaker report endorsed

8. Treasurer's report

Terry C reported on behalf of Andrew B. A written financial report would be available for Conference

9. Trade union Officers report

Ollie reported from a written report from Tim

250 members had replied to the survey strong white collar public sector membership; we need to work on wider membership from other occupations. We will send out a more detailed questionnaire. Perhaps establish a branch TU contact. We need constructive work in the unions. We need to be there in assistance in support in the different struggles. We need to offer training to our young members on how to be good trade unionists

Meeting endorsed the idea of having a working group on TUs

Trade Union report endorsed. Written report to be circulated to branches – attached as Appendix 1.

10. Conference and internal elections report

Terry C moved the report which appears as Appendix 2.

Points 1-3 were noted

Point 4 of the report was accepted

Point 5 was accepted.

It was noted that two other members had not received emails relating to the nomination process but were not requesting further action. Point 6

After discussion on point 6, Terry C moved and Pete McC seconded the following amended point 6:

This TNC notes that these elections have been run under the version of the constitution which appears on the website. Conference will receive a report from Chris H, acting nominating officer as to this fact and asked to accept or reject this.

Chris' report on this point should be circulated to members in advance

Standing Orders Committee will be informed of this and asked to amend the timetable to allow this to be dealt with.

Meeting noted with gratitude the work put in by comrades running the internal elections and to all who have agreed to stand

11. Conference business There had been message from standing orders committee

There should be timed business for different topics

There was a request for branches and policy commission to work to composite motions to enable conference to deal with more business

Commissions would be the first item in each session, then motions that had not been taken in November, then Branch resolutions and finally resolutions from individuals

Agreed there needs to be balanced debate on each item

Agreed that voting should be taken after each motion to aid clarity.

Agreed a prioritisation process would take place for future conferences with branches or regions voting

Agree that we feed back this discussion to standing orders committee

12. Agreed that a small group of officers look at intro and farewell from conference and what members would take away from conference such as membership cards or badges
13. Forward Planning working party including national officers to make recommendations to national council. Mike S to be contact person
14. Organising the youth is a priority
15. Questionnaire will go to branches to work out what works
16. Policy commissions
17. Agreed that they will be ongoing and that central funds would cover room hire.
Commissions should refer to Pete G (who the meeting believes agreed to convene to reconstituted policy commissions overview working party) requests for funding, accessibility and technology issues.
18. Safe spaces FD spoke to the proposal that the document should go to the branches after March conference

In interim the procedures remain in place

Document should be on the website for discussion also

Safe spaces would have a dedicated email address for this debate; action point agreed was that document should specify what safe spaces is and what its not

Report agreed 18 for 5 against.

20 Media and publicity strategy referred to working party on forward planning

21 On line branch: Motion from Crouch End

Oliver asked for it to be ruled out of order as it had been rejected by the previous meeting

Chair ruled in favour of continuing; agreed that this acceptance would not set a precedent

Motion was moved by Terry C:

Crouch End Left Unity welcomes Left Unity's commitment to inclusivity and the participation of all members irrespective of any disability. We note however that not all Left Unity members are able to physically attend a geographical or work/study branch for mobility or other reasons. In the light of this, we call on Left Unity's Transitional National Council to approve in principle the setting up of an online branch for members unable to participate otherwise, to facilitate their full participation, in line with Left Unity's constitution. The TNC will then appoint a sub-committee of those with the technical expertise to set this up to function in a safe and democratic fashion.

Amendment to last sentence , to delete all after 'expertise to' and insert 'bring proposals to the next Council meeting as to how the online branch will function in a safe and democratic way, was moved by Jon D, discussed and agreed.21 for 4 against 3 abstentions

Following a comfort break, the Chair requested that delegates should wave or speak up in future if they didn't follow what was going on. She asked for volunteers for the working group to develop proposals in relation to an online branch.

They were: Bianca, Felicity, Guy H, Merry, Olly, Steve W. Terry C

22. Worcester Items:

- Scottish Independence Referendum: There was a short discussion and a paper adopted by Nottinghamshire LU was circulated for information.
- LU Presence at Labour Movement Festivals: It was noted that work was already underway around the Tolpuddle and the Durham Miners Gala. Leeds North and East Branch was planning for the Orgreave picnic.
- It was agreed that both the Forward Planning Working Group and the Trade Union Group look at these issues and the trade union group look at LU presence at union conferences.

23. Elections: It was agreed that branches thinking of standing LU candidates should contact nominatingofficer@leftunity.org as soon as possible

AOB

24 •NATO Summit near Newport: There would be antiwar protests from around Britain from 30 August. Cardiff LU was discussing.

25 •TUSC: It was reported that TUSC had written to LU. No one in the meeting had further knowledge of this.

Appendix 1

Left Unity Trade Unionists' Report

We have begun the process of gathering details of Left Unity members' trade union affiliations and activity, in order to gain an overview, as the first step towards a more co-ordinated approach for the party's active trade unionists. This information was drawn from the Left Unity membership data base, gathered by volunteers in branches, and replies to requests for information sent out from the national email list. We have also begun to put together a list of members interested in being part of a trade unionists working group, and those willing to be contacts for their branch or for members of the same union.

So far we have collected the details of 249 members (approximately one sixth of the paying membership) over the last few weeks. This has, of course, much room for improvement, and means we are yet to have a full picture. However, it does provide a sample which can provide us with some useful information.

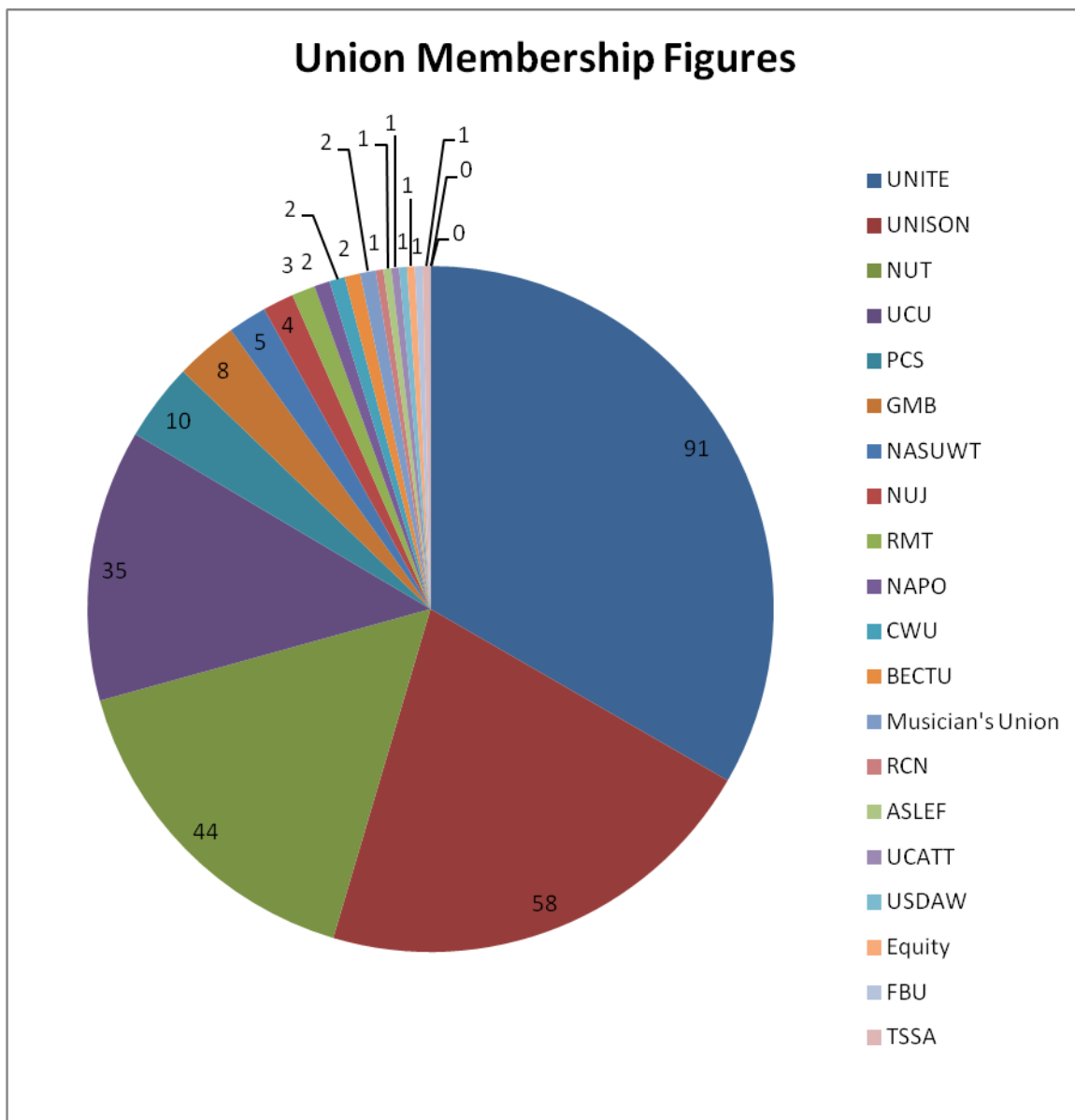
Charts with the current figures we have acquired are below:

Figure 1

<u>Union</u>	<u>Number of Members</u>	<u>Percentage of Membership</u>
UNITE	91	33.45588
UNISON	58	21.32353
NUT	44	16.17647
UCU	35	12.86765
PCS	10	3.676471
GMB	8	2.941176
NASUWT	5	1.838235
NUJ	4	1.470588
RMT	3	1.102941
NAPO	2	0.735294
CWU	2	0.735294
BECTU	2	0.735294
Musician's Union	2	0.735294
RCN	1	0.367647
ASLEF	1	0.367647
UCATT	1	0.367647
USDAW	1	0.367647
Equity	1	0.367647
FBU	1	0.367647
TSSA	1	0.367647
272*Total		100 Percent

*This figure counts members who are members of more than one union more than once, hence the increase from 249 to 272. This does make the percentage figure slightly wrong, but as these are just indicative figures anyway, I decided to keep these included.

Figure 2



One-third of our current sample are organised in Unite the Union, while a further one-fifth are members of Unison. Around sixty percent are organised in what can be described as public sector unions; however, the percentage who are public sector workers is definitely greater than that given that both large general unions, Unite and GMB, have significant numbers of members employed in the public sector, and we have not yet gathered sufficient information regarding the industry these members work in to know how many are members of Left Unity. A significant proportion, just under one-third of the sample, are organised in teachers' and lecturers unions.

As acknowledged above, this is very much an incomplete picture. Our current information as to the industries in which members work is very limited, and the information to be drawn from union affiliation alone is relatively limited, particularly in the case of the larger and the general unions. However, if we for the sake of argument assume that the figures in our sample are representative of the spread of our union members, then it is clear that Left Unity's membership is more represented in the public sector unions, and vastly disproportionately in the education unions. While the largest

part of our membership is organised in Unite, almost the same number of members are members of the UCU, NUT and NASUWT lecturers and teachers unions. This, despite the fact that the TUC gives Unite's membership as 1,319,413, while the three education unions mentioned have 737,967 members between them. There are some other issues- we have a very low representation in the GMB, which is Britain's third largest union with the second largest number of organised private sector workers. Of our sample, only one member is in USDAW, Britain's fourth largest union (albeit with a very high turnover of membership). The PCS, CWU, RMT and FBU, while smaller unions, seem underrepresented given the relative militancy of those unions. The overall picture from these figures is that Left Unity appears similar to the left more generally in the trade union movement- more common in the public sector (though this is in keeping with the disproportionate number of unionised public sector workers as opposed to the private sector), with a disproportionate representation in teaching and lecturing unions.

We have also been attempting to gather information regarding which industries our members work in, as well as individual information regarding workplace, union branch and union positions. This information remains very patchy, and we will need to launch a much more systematic survey in order to gather more.

We believe it best, for now, to concentrate on organising trade union activists, rather than inactive members, as this is the first step towards a more coordinated intervention in the unions. In order to do this, we should:

- 1) Send out a more detailed questionnaire to all Left Unity members, which asks people to provide information as to their union activities. We should also ask members to indicate if they are not in a union at all, as this will give us an accurate idea of what proportion of our members are in unions.
- 2) Send out regular emails to Left Unity members who are union activists, with information regarding union activities.
- 3) Put in place branch contacts and contacts for each union, who can help with the gathering and disseminating of information, and general coordination.
- 4) Put together a working group to take a lead in coordinating trade union activity.

We also have some immediate upcoming tasks which require attention:

- 1) For trade union conferences, we need to:
 - a. We need to put together a list of dates and venues for this year's conferences.
 - b. We need to work out where we have members going, and look to put these members in contact with each other to discuss how to organise at their conferences.
 - c. Identify one or two key conferences to organise a large scale intervention and fringe meeting.
- 2) Festivals – Tolpuddle Martyrs festival and Durham Miners Gala are both coming up, as is May Day and other events. Wherever possible we need large, visible contributions from Left Unity .

Report on Internal elections for TNC

1. Work around the internal elections was delegated by the Acting Nominating Officer Chris H to a number of the other acting officers; Kate H, Guy H and Terry C and to the new administrative assistance Tyler C, as well as professional advice from Tim N who acted as returning officer at the Founding Conference.
2. The process of setting up the elections has involved a huge amount of work by these acting officers. A small number of volunteers will be needed to check ballots at the close of poll. This can be done remotely. TNC members willing to help should speak to Terry C at the TNC or email elections@leftunity.org (People will obviously not check a section of the election process in which they are standing.)
3. Nominations will need to be reopened after the Manchester conference in the following parts of the elections as there were not sufficient candidates: Appeals, Eastern, London , North East, North West, Scotland, South East, South West and could need to be reopened in West Midlands and Yorkshire and Humberside depending on the outcome of the DES section (ie if any of those standing in both are elected to and take up seat(s) in DES section this will leave a vacancy at Regional level
4. There was a difficulty with the Disputes committee election where no acceptance of nomination or election statement was received from one candidate to the proper email address: elections@leftunity.org by the time the ballot started, despite several attempts to contact them. It has subsequently emerged that their acceptance and statement was in fact sent to info@leftunity.org in good time. It is also noted that the candidate themselves had been hospitalised during this period due to serious illness. It is therefore proposed that the TNC agrees that this election be rerun on the basis of the existing nominations, including this one and that this election takes place at the same time as those referred to in point 3 above. In the interim it is proposed that the interim Disputes Committee would continue to function.
5. There has been a claim from one member that they submitted nominations for the DES section before the deadline which did not appear on the ballot paper. These nominations were not received and the sender has been asked to provide evidence of sending which has currently not been received. This matter was only raised after the ballot had commenced.
6. These elections have taken place under the version of the constitution sent to the acting officers after the founding conference by Richard Murgatroyd and Sean Thompson who moved the constitution at that conference.
It has subsequently been raised that there was an error in the section of the constitution dealing with nominations which currently says two members are necessary but should in fact say 20.
In our view given that the bar is lower and therefore allows more members to stand for office there is not a substantive problem. These elections should continue and we should then revert to 20 afterwards as the basis for further elections (unless or until this is amended by conference)

Chris H Acting Nominating Officer

Terry C Acting Membership and Communications