

Left Unity Transitional National Council

Report of work December 2013 to March 2014

The Founding Conference of 30th November 2013 laid the political and constitutional basis for a new party of the left in Britain. The Conference was clear about the politics of Left Unity, establishing a clear set of principles – socialist, feminist and environmentalist - enabling us rapidly to begin to intervene in British politics in the interests of the working class and internationally on the basis of solidarity and anti-imperialism. The Conference was also clear about the democratic and open nature of our party, based on one member, one vote, with transparent structures and processes, using new technology where possible to increase our inclusivity and participation.

It is these twin challenges: to build our distinctive political profile and intervention and to establish party organisations, structures and processes on a sound footing that has guided the work of the TNC since foundation.

What the Founding Conference required of us:

A constitutional appendix required the TNC to organise a further national conference within three months and elect acting national officers to serve until elections at that point. The following were elected: secretary – Kate Hudson; treasurer – Andrew Burgin; nominating officer – Chris Hurley; principal national speakers – Felicity Dowling, Bianca Todd, Pete Green and Salman Shaheen; press – Tom Walker; access – Merry Cross; membership and internal communications – Guy Harper and Terry Conway (job share); trade unions – Oliver New and Tim Nelson (job share); website editor – Sean Thompson; website technical manager – Luke Collison; members were also elected to acting committees: standing orders; conference arrangements; disputes; finance and audit; web editorial team.

The TNC has met three times since foundation, with a key focus on preparing the national conference and the online/postal ballot elections involving all members.

Political impact:

Press, media and website: Left Unity has had press or broadcast coverage in The Guardian, Financial Times, Telegraph, Evening Standard, Sun, Sky News, RT News, BBC News, BBC Radio 4, BBC Radio London, BBC Radio Scotland, BBC Radio Midlands, LBC radio, Huffington Post, New Statesman, Red Pepper, and Left Foot Forward; it has also featured in the left press, local media and has received student press coverage. The Left Unity website is developing more outward facing articles, news and commentary to extend the reach of our policies and political analysis. A redesign is currently underway, thanks to Tom Butlin and Luke Collison. Our social media profile is also being developed.

Press releases and statements are produced around twice a week, giving the Left Unity perspective on key political issues, including Don't cut floods jobs, Release Moazzam Begg, RBS bonuses, Ukraine, support for the anti-fracking protests and most recently the teachers' strike and the welfare cap. We have also paid tribute to Bob Crow and Tony Benn.

Trade unions: The acting trade union officers are conducting a survey of union membership within Left Unity. So far the details of 249 members have been collected. One-third of the current sample are organised in Unite the Union, while a further one-fifth are members of Unison. Around sixty percent are organised in 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. A significant proportion, just under one-third of the sample, are organised in teachers' and lecturers unions. Next steps in our trade union work include continuing to

gather information, regular contact with trade union activists, development of branch contacts and establishing a working group coordinating trade union activity, including participation in key union events.

Student work: Left Unity students have been active in a number of areas: the campaign to elect Edward Snowden as rector of Glasgow university was an initiative of LU students; Birmingham LU students were active in the occupation and the defend education campaign, as LU students also were in Exeter.

Demonstrations and campaigns: LU members and branches have been active across a range of issues, including Defend the NHS protests, housing protests, anti-ATOS protests, working with Disabled People against the Cuts; anti-fracking has been a focus particularly in the north-west; LU teachers have been active in the recent strikes; LU sent a five person national delegation to the People's Assembly recall conference and there is substantial engagement with local people's assemblies; LU worked to build the recent UN anti-racist day demonstration in London through its social media outlets, with LU member Denis Fernando playing a leading role in the organisation of the event. Many branches have produced local campaigning material to put forward Left Unity's political positions within these campaigns and to recruit new members, as well as branch banners which have raised Left Unity's profile on demonstrations and in campaigns

International: We have participated in the European eco-socialist network initiated by the Parti de Gauche; we issued a political statement on the Ukraine crisis; we are beginning a process of dialogue with like-minded European parties, and welcome delegates from the European Left Party, Die Linke and the Danish Red/Green Alliance to this conference.

Local public meetings: Our four principal speakers have undertaken numerous meetings – as well as media work - around the country on a range of themes. Local branch meetings cover subjects as diverse as housing and the centenary of WW1.

Publications: Recent publications include the teachers' leaflet produced for this week's strike; the popular 'politics needs a new face' leaflet; and the broadsheet produced for International Women's Day by the LU women's caucus - well-received at the WAAA.

The developing work of the caucuses: The women's broadsheet was an indication of the developing work of the women's caucus; the LGBT caucus is working on a broadsheet for Pride; the disabled people's caucus is also active and together with Access Officer Merry Cross has prioritised making sure that this national conference is fully accessible; Left Unity is working to ensure its policy in this area is being made a reality.

Safe Spaces policy: In line with its anti-discrimination and inclusivity policy, work is ongoing on the party's safe spaces policy. This is in final draft stage and will be taken to the next national conference for final amendment and voting.

Party registration: Nominations Officer Chris Hurley and Treasurer Andrew Burgin have registered the party name, Left Unity, with the Electoral Commission.

Disputes Committee work: The interim Disputes Committee has been functioning since February, working on one case.

Membership, branch and region information

National membership figures: As of 22 March 2014 we have 1520 members of whom 39 are behind with their payments. Barbara Segal is responsible for the membership database and Rob Marsden provides local membership data to branches who request it. We extend our thanks for their work.

Regional membership, branches and branches in formation breakdown:

Region/Country ¹	Members	Branches	Branches in formation ²
Eastern	94	2	3
East Midlands	98	5	1
London	382	13	2
North East	24	0	1
North West	188	6	3-4
Scotland	51	1	3
South East	232	5	4
South West	131	2	2-4
Wales	49	1	1-2
West Midlands	123	4	3
Yorkshire and Humberside	126	6	3
	1498 ³	45	24-29

Since the founding conference we have sent 7 newsletters to our 10,600 supporters - these include members, signatories to the appeal from Ken Loach last year, and those that have simply signed up to the newsletter from our website. Two updates have also been sent to members during this time. The newsletter is now sent out by our new office worker using the mailchimp system. There are plans to integrate this with our membership database and a new payment system to streamline what is currently a very labour-intensive setup, with a view to being able to regularly alert branches to new members in their area.

All branches have been represented at at least one and usually more than one National Coordinating Group/Transitional National Council. At each individual meeting somewhere between 50-75% of branches have been represented. Recruitment and branch development is steady and the forward planning working party agreed at the last TNC will contribute to the development of a recruitment strategy in discussion with the National Council. Regional organization is in various stages of development.

Regional organization:

In London there is a London activists' email group which functions to share information about London-wide events. In South London a recent aggregate meeting was held including almost 40 members from 6 branches and 2 branches in formation. In the North East where there is the lowest membership of any region, there is an email group for all members and discussion has taken place about sending national speakers to help with launch meetings. In the North West there was a regional meeting in March which was attended by 27 members from various branches which discussed the region's approach to the European elections in the context of the previous election of a BNP member by a narrow margin. The region has agreed to endorse Peter Cranie, Green Party candidate, following assurances from him in response to questions from Left Unity. In the South West a recent regional meeting

¹ Regions and nations are based on European constituencies as per the constitution

² Branches in formation are those in the process of development.

³ These numbers don't include people who have not given us a geographical location or those living outside Britain but does include those whose membership payments have not yet been verified or are recently lapsed.

attended by 18 people from Exeter, Dorset, Gloucestershire as well as Bristol, where it was agreed to involve those without a branch yet in their regional committee structure in this very geographically spread region. The region will also take responsibility for Left Unity's involvement in the Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival.

In Yorkshire and Humberside there has been no formal regional meeting but comrades from Leeds, York and Bradford got together informally in York on March 8 after the regional TUC demonstration in defence of the NHS. Members from Huddersfield, Sheffield and Doncaster joined with comrades from Leeds, York, Bradford and Doncaster at the Leeds N&E meeting on 30 Years After the Miners' Strike on March 15 at which they collected £70 for striking Doncaster Care workers. In April they are planning a regional speaking tour and will contribute to the Orgreave commemoration event on June 15th.

National organization (Scotland and Wales):

In Scotland members from the Glasgow branch are planning to visit branches in formation and isolated members in the rest of the country. In Wales the Cardiff branch is working to develop other branches in the rest of South Wales. There is currently no branch in North Wales.

Financial Report

The accounts summary found below shows income and expenditure covering the period from the foundation of Left Unity 1 December 2013 to 10 March 2014. Our account period will end on the 30 November 2014.

Finance and Audit Committee: A finance committee has been established by the TNC. It comprises Andrew Burgin, Chris Hurley, Barbara Segal and Rob Marsden.

Book keeping: Alice Kilroy has agreed to provide professional book keeping services on a day a month basis. She is appropriately experienced with 10 years' experience of book keeping, currently for the Stop the War Coalition and Muswell Press (a small book publisher). In the past she has been the book keeper for Red Pepper Magazine 2004 to 2009 and for Art in the Park 2007 to 2011 (a charity based at Burgess Park in Southwark). She charges £8.80 per hour (the London living wage). We have purchased the accounts system she recommends: QuickBooks Pro.

Account Balance: In the Left Unity account on the 27th March was **£9,961.33**.

Local Groups: All branches of Left Unity are encouraged to set up their own bank accounts in order to receive the 20% of their members' subscriptions as specified in the constitution. Those branches that have sent us details of their bank accounts have been paid the first quarter's subs.

National Conference travel subsidy: The finance committee proposed that there should a fare subsidy pool for those in need, as there was at the Founding Conference. We recommended £1,000 for this purpose. The TNC agreed a committee to oversee the disbursement of this. The committee is Bianca Todd, Terry Conway and Merry Cross.

TNC Fares: As specified in the constitution, fares of delegates will be reimbursed at a 'reasonable rate'. This means fares booked in advance at a cheap rate. TNC fares have been averaging £600-£700 per meeting.

Office rental: We are currently looking for an accessible office space in the region of £700 to £900 per month, inclusive. In the meantime we are temporarily working from Housmans at a charge of £50 a week. We have registered with the Ethical Property Company and several commercial agencies.

Admin assistant: We have employed a 2 day a week admin assistant, paid at the London living wage rate (£8.80 per hour).