

# **Policy from Left Unity National Conference**

## **Manchester – 29 March 2014**

### **Section 1 - Economy and Austerity**

#### **Left Unity Economics Policy Commission - Document for Policy Conference March 2014**

##### **Introduction – The Economic Context**

The global financial crisis which erupted in 2008 triggered the worst economic slump in many economies since the early 1930s. Six years on output had still not recovered to its previous peak in much of Europe, including Britain. Debt-ridden economies within the Eurozone have been devastated by austerity packages primarily designed to ensure banks and other creditors are repaid regardless of the long-term economic and social consequences. As in the 1930s and 1980s, the mass of working people are being forced to pay the costs of a crisis, for which they were not responsible, whilst the wealthiest 1% continue to rake in bonuses, and stuff their bank accounts in tax havens.

The crisis was precipitated by the excesses of global financial markets but has also exposed the chronic instability and grotesque inequalities which have characterised free-market globalising capitalism since the 1970s. In Britain we are suffering from the consequences of 30 years of what is known as ‘neo-liberalism’ – the privatisation of publicly owned services and utilities, the deregulation of financial and other markets, the pervasive marketization of everyday life, and a sustained onslaught on the gains won by the labour movement in the period from the end of the second world war after 1945.

At the time of writing (March 2014) Britain is experiencing a recovery for the few. Average real wages (after taking into account inflation) are still at least 6% below their level in 2008 with the average worker £30 a week or £1500 a year, worse off. Cuts in public-sector jobs continue apace, disproportionately hurting women, ethnic minorities and some of the poorest regions in the country.

It is a myth that there is no money available. Private sector corporations were sitting on cash reserves of £671 billion (almost 50% of national income) in 2013, which they were unwilling to invest productively. The Bank of England has pumped many billions more into the financial markets preventing further collapse but also fuelling another round of house price inflation in London and the South-East, whilst much of the country remains trapped in stagnation or decline. Banks are reluctant to lend to any small business which actually needs the money, whilst handing out huge sums to buy-to-let landlords and property developers. Radical measures are necessary to ensure a transformation in the economic structure and a reversal of the damage inflicted over the last 30 years of attacks waged by the rich and powerful on the rest of us.

## **An Immediate End to Austerity and Cuts in Public Services**

The Economic Policies proposed by Left Unity must necessarily need to change in focus over time whilst retaining the core principles on which the party was founded.

At this point we call for an **immediate**

1. **Reversal of the cuts in public spending** and the austerity package pushed through by the Conservative Government and an expansion of public spending in pursuit of a policy of full employment (see below)
2. **End to privatisation** of public services in health, education etc, a reversal of outsourcing at all levels and a scrapping of the so-called Private-Public Partnerships and PFI schemes (see other commissions for more detail on these proposals)
3. **Abolition of zero-hours contracts** and the use of agencies to evade European legislation on employment rights (along with all the anti-trade union legislation introduced by the Tories but retained under New Labour)
4. **Raising of the minimum wage** up to the level of a living wage linked to measures of the cost of living (with a higher rate to cover additional housing costs in London and comparable areas) and to the European decency threshold the UK state pension is the lowest in Europe and should be raised to 100% of median earnings.])
5. **Reversal of those changes to the tax system** which have hurt the poor (we would lower VAT to 15% as a first step) and benefited the rich (we would restore the 50% rate of tax on incomes above £75,000 received by the richest 2%) with further changes outlined below

## **A Strategic Vision of Structural Change and A Different Society**

Left Unity, since its founding conference, is committed to the principle of production for meeting human need not primarily for profit, or 'people not profit'. We are environmentalist, feminist and socialist and all these traditions of thought have influenced the proposals below for fundamental structural change in Britain. Ultimately our vision is a society organised on completely different principles from those which govern capitalism:

8. A democratic society in which the economy is in the hands of the majority, where decisions about our economic interests are made in workplaces, communities and across workplaces, and where appropriate, centrally.
6. **The principle of from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs.**
- 7 ***The principle of common ownership and democratic control over natural resources and the means of producing wealth. This does not simply mean 'state ownership', but encompasses: nationalisation, local authority control, workers' cooperatives, and other forms of community ownership.***

9. **An end to the short-termism** which prioritises the extraction of resources such as oil and gas despite the risk of long-term destruction of our environment.

10. **An internationalism** which recognises that in a world of global capital and finance we cannot put an end to capitalism in one country alone nor abolish Britain's reliance on exchange and trade with both Europe and the rest of the world. There need to be global solutions to global problems such as climate change.

Left Unity as a broad party contains a healthy diversity of views on how a socialist society could be attained. We are under no illusions that any such programme can be implemented without meeting resistance from the richest 1% in Britain and elsewhere, especially those elites who control transnational corporations and global finance. However what we can seek to achieve in Britain, in association with other similar left parties across Europe, are fundamental changes which

11. **Reverse the impact of 30 years of so-called neo-liberalism** (i.e. privatisation, deregulation, and the widening obscene inequality of wealth and income between a tiny 1% - or 0.1% of the very rich - and the vast majority of people).

12. **End the dominance of the private financial sector and the City of London** in particular, within the economy and over Governments formed by all main political parties.

13. **Shift resources** towards those areas of the country which have suffered from decades of deindustrialisation (the closure of factories, mines, shipyards etc.) and high long-term unemployment,

14. **Would be part of a national plan for regeneration of the economy** (together with proposals from other commissions on education, health, housing etc.) which as a priority would reverse the chronic structural imbalances between the bloated financial sector and other parts of the economy, and between the wealthiest and the most deprived communities.

15. **Respond to the threat of climate change** with measures which take into account the full social costs of current policies for energy, transport and the natural environment.

We recognise the obstacles to implementing any such programme of structural reforms. The response of Labour Governments to threats of capital flight and investment strikes has always been to capitulate. However:

16. We would help to build **international networks of solidarity** to support any government introducing such measures within Europe and elsewhere.

### **Employment Policy**

Full employment, as existed in the postwar period up until the 1970s, should be a primary objective for any left government. But we recognise that the type of jobs created and their conditions and pay also matter. All the policies outlined here will contribute to a dramatic reduction in both unemployment and underemployment (part-time workers who seek more hours). In particular we would prioritise:

17. **Green Jobs:** Electricity generation and transmission, transport and the heating and cooling of buildings account for 83% of greenhouse gasses emitted in Britain annually and it is vital that we adopt a twin track strategy of 'powering down' (reducing energy wastage) and 'powering up' (hugely expanding our generation capacity by developing and deploying zero carbon technologies based on wind, sun and water). This strategy would require a massive infrastructural investment and reconstruction programme, prioritising the rapid development of three key sectors - energy generation and transmission, construction and transport - and the creation of hundreds of thousands of new and sustainable jobs. Such a major programme of public investment and employment would not only lead to major regeneration in other key industrial sectors, but to rapid growth in R&D in sustainable and socially useful technology and stimulate the demand for graduates from almost all areas of tertiary education and/or training.

18. **Purple Jobs:** The term refers to jobs in the caring sectors which are being remorselessly cut by local authorities as a result of national government reductions in their funding. We would not only reverse those cuts but significantly expand the public sector (which currently mainly employs women) ensuring that labour necessary for the society no longer faces low wages and increasingly casualised and precarious conditions of employment. These are jobs which are critical for support for disabled people, the sick and the rapidly growing numbers of older pensioners. They are also jobs in childcare which would be provided for free to all those with children below school-age. Job creation in a unionised public sector in these areas will serve to strengthen unions and collective bargaining and raise pay levels generally.

(The purpose of Purple job creation is to free women from primary caring responsibilities which have led to their concentration in part-time work, discontinuous labour, and involuntary underemployment. Ending segregation of the labour market where women are consigned to low pay and underemployment to enable them to provide caring for children, sick, disabled people and the elderly, these jobs will enable men and women to work in this sector. This is a step towards ending women's unpaid personal labour at home enabling their full participation in employment and enabling their access to education, personal development and economic independence.)

19. **Creation of Vertically Integrated Cooperative Sector as part of a general national economic plan for the economy.** A vertically integrated sector is one which produces all inputs and outputs from initial production to consumption goods. A workers' owned and operated sector (that is locally or regionally based) can be targeted initially to revitalise areas of the country that are suffering from severe unemployment under worker's control and management as part of a transformational project away from a capitalist competitive basis towards cooperative organisation of work. Initial start-up funds and investment will be provided by the national government at zero interest.

20. **A Reduction in the Standard Working Week to 35 hours in the first instance,** with further reductions over time and corresponding adjustments to the hourly living wage. Wage adjustments will ensure that no loss of income is suffered as a result of reduced working hours. All additional hours over 35 are to be voluntary at overtime rates of pay, negotiated under collective agreements with trade unions.

## **The Banks and Finance**

The financial crash of 2008 exposed the damaging consequences of deregulation of the banking sector since the 1970s – and the disastrous consequences of having the City of London operate as a global financial centre divorced from the rest of the economy. Even

partial socialisation (to cover the losses) of banks such as Lloyds and RBS has not changed how the banks operate or put an end to multi-million pound bonuses

We propose

21. **An extension of the publicly owned banking sector to embrace all the major British owned banks, building societies and insurance companies.** New forms of governance, combining control by elected representatives of finance workers and local communities and government, would scrap the bonus culture and direct credit to the most socially desirable forms of investment. Compensation in the form of fixed-interest government bonds could be provided, e.g. to pension funds *and shareholders (capped at a certain level so that large shareholders lose most of their investments), depending on the results of an audit of shareholders.*

22. **A tax on financial transactions** (sometimes known as a Robin Hood tax) which across the EU would both raise revenue and significantly reduce the scale of speculative cross-border financial flows.

23. **Tighter regulation over all forms of financial activity**, especially capital controls on cross-border movement of funds by institutional investors, hedge funds etc, although these would be difficult to implement in Britain alone and we should seek effective European-wide (if not global) regulation where possible.

24. **Reform of pension funds**, many of which are currently in the control of fund managers or investment banks that are responsible for the allocation of funds currently worth over £1 trillion with no democratic accountability.

25. **Measures to assist and protect from eviction** those households trapped by debts or with mortgages they are unable to repay.

### **Other Forms of Public Ownership and Cooperatives**

Left Unity also proposes

26. **The return to public ownership of all the essential public utilities** (with the same rule for compensation as for the banks), such as electricity, gas, rail and bus transport, water *and telecoms companies*, which were privatised over the last 30 years. The private companies have raised prices faster than inflation, made huge profits and still neglected investment in essential infrastructure.

27. **We also propose the public ownership of companies that attempt to destabilise a Left Unity government, by a 'strike of capital' or by trying to transfer assets overseas, and other essential services**, including the giant supermarket companies, which dominate the retail trade and much of the agricultural and food industry in this country. *We would combine and socialise the energy companies into one democratically controlled institution to reduce energy costs immediately.*

We recognise, however, that state ownership alone does not suffice.

28. **We would disregard intellectual property rights** where those rights pertain to inalienable natural commons such as and especially our genetic code and the genetic code of other organisms, regardless of whether or not that genetic material is the result of processes of human technical interventions .

29. **New forms of governance** are necessary involving democratic elections of both worker and community representatives. That also applies to existing public services such as the NHS and Educational institutions.
30. **There should be a cap on the highest rates of pay** for managers across the public sector, set no higher than three times the average wage in the sector.
31. **It is also essential to support and extend existing forms of cooperative and mutual ownership**, whilst preventing the violation of those principles evident in the mismanagement of the Cooperative bank. We will oppose and campaign against the demutualisation of existing building societies and other cooperatives. We would ensure that financial institutions under public ownership gave priority to lending to worker, consumer and housing cooperatives, as part of the broader strategic priorities outlined above under employment policy.

### **Taxation policy**

When the Coalition came to power, it made it clear that the reducing Britain's budget deficit would be primarily achieved through public spending cuts rather than tax increases. The result has been the most vulnerable sections of society pushed ever deeper into poverty. What tax rises we have seen such as VAT have largely been regressive measures, hitting poorest households hardest. Meanwhile, the government has given away billions to the richest individuals and biggest corporations through tax cuts, while failing to stop billions more being siphoned off to tax havens. Richard Murphy of Tax Research estimates the tax gap at £123 billion a year.

32. **We need tax policies to offset the cost of reversing the spending cuts in the immediate term, while in the longer-term realigning the British tax system into a progressive framework that substantially reduces inequality, protects the poor and ensures the rich pay a much higher share.**

Left Unity will therefore:

33. **Work to stamp out tax evasion and avoidance**, drawing on the wealth of research by the Tax Justice Network. A Left Unity government would implement unilateral measures at home to shore up its domestic tax base, including a general anti-avoidance principle, strengthening HMRC, creating strong barriers to protect tax policy making and administration from political and corporate interference, controlled foreign company reform and aligning capital gains tax with income tax. It will work with governments around the world to promote financial transparency and prevent tax avoidance by pushing for country-by-country reporting, unitary taxation and automatic information exchange. It will crack down on the UK's network of tax haven Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories which lie at the heart of the global tax avoidance industry.
34. **Immediately eliminate VAT** on all goods and services.
35. **Reverse the corporate tax cuts**, raising rates back to 40% for large companies, while reducing taxes for small businesses to compensate them for the mandatory living wage. As a matter of principle, Left Unity subscribes to international tax cooperation and building a framework of rules and conventions to inhibit tax wars and beggar-my-neighbour tax policies. We will work with other governments to push for higher corporate taxation rates globally.

36. **Bring back the 50% tax rate** and apply it to people earning over £75,000. We would introduce an 90% for all earnings 10 times above the median wage. We will work to lift all those earning below £20,000 a year out of tax entirely.
37. **Introduce an inheritance tax, rising to 90% on all wealth and assets 100 times the median average level, along with a wealth tax of 10% on wealth more than 10 times the median.**
38. **Investigate alternatives to council tax** including a mansion tax for homes over £2 million and a local income tax, and introduce **a land value tax** collected centrally and redistributed to local authorities according to need.

### **On Trade and the European Union**

39. Given that over 50% of Britain's trade is with the rest of the EU **we do not propose a withdrawal from the Single Market**, or 'protectionism' against imports, whilst recognising that some of what we propose (such as capital controls) will be in breach of Single Market rules on the free movement of capital.
40. **We are opposed to Britain joining the single currency** as currently constituted with an unaccountable European Central Bank which has helped impose austerity measures on countries such as Greece, Ireland and Portugal.
41. **We also oppose the provisions of the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership** between the EU and the USA which threaten to impose further privatisation of public services and weaker forms of environmental regulation *plus reducing the public's access to truthful information, by allowing corporations to conceal information or research which could cause damage to public health if it is seen as potentially damaging to the corporation's future profitability. This is in line with consistent choosing of profit over people by current policy makers and is unacceptable, threatening freedom of information and human rights.*
42. We are for joining with others across Europe to campaign for **a different form of European Union**, a '**socialist reconstruction**', as called for by the 4<sup>th</sup> Congress of the European Left Party.

**For Further Debate:** There are a number of proposals for a different type of economy based on democratic and socialist principles which we believe deserve further debate in the wider movement. However:

43. The Economic Policy Commission considers that under capitalism (but not necessarily in a fully socialist society) the various competing versions of a Citizen's Income will in practice promote the neo-liberal agenda of reducing the welfare state and leave the most disadvantaged people in society worse off. Our alternative is to promote full employment as outlined in the document and the principle of from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs.

### **Zero-hours contracts**

#### Conference notes:

- The widespread increase in zero-hours contracts and agency work in both the private and public sector, and the link to the 'extra hours culture' leading to the

restructuring of the workforce, and shifting control further towards employers and away from employees.

- The impact this is having upon wage levels, employment rights, job security and the divisive influence that this has upon the workforce.
- The substantial variation in wages across different sectors of the economy
- The national minimum wage for apprenticeships is £2.68 an hour Apprenticeships in general can be used to undercut wages – which obviously undermines the minimum wage.
- The low level of unionisation in those sections of the workforce most affected by ZHC and agency work.
- The success of Hovis workers in preventing the imposition of ZHC/agency work and the success of unionisation campaigns in the USA.
- The success that Die Linke has had in building support for its campaign for a minimum wage in Germany.
- The increased attacks on the legal rights of ordinary people.

Conference believes:

- Young workers are greatly impacted by ZHC and agency work, creating insecurity, a lack of control and the removal of their human dignity.
- There is a disproportionate impact on women and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups, those with disabilities and LGBT groups.
- Benefit claimants are often forced onto work programmes, workfare schemes, 'bogus' training courses and forced off JSA by sanctions; increasing their feelings of punishment, humiliation and disempowerment.
- The ConDem government is continuing to accelerate attacks on those claiming benefits; notably the threat to remove benefit rights from those aged 18 to 25 without any provision for genuine training and apprenticeships leading to real jobs.
- The Labour Party is complicit in this and there is scant evidence of any resolve to reverse these attacks.
- People should be empowered to work on their causes and campaigns, to gain full ownership of their lives for themselves.

Conference agrees:

To launch a Left Unity national campaign that aims to work with trade unions and groups inside and outside the workplace to:



1. Develop a high profile identity linking together all groups affected by this restructuring of the workforce – zero hours workers, agency workers, low paid workers, benefit claimants, young people and un-unionised workers.
2. Campaign for those undergoing “training” and “apprenticeships”, in addition to other workers, to be paid the level of a living wage.
3. Campaign for a boycott of and an end to workfare.
4. Produce campaigning materials made available to all branches.
5. Lobby/target employers to change their employment practices.
6. Support the unionisation of workers in the private and the public sector.
7. Campaign for an end to the denial of and reduction of JSA under the sanctions regimes.

## **Austerity**

Left Unity rejects the pessimistic, cynical and inhumane austerity policies of the UKIP, Tory, Lib-Dem and Labour leaders and welcomes the Agenda for Hope published by Owen Jones in The Independent on 27 January. We see this as an achievable, minimum five-year programme, and will seek to build a progressive consensus around it with Owen Jones and The People's Assembly.

Left Unity believes that a national united movement of resistance against austerity is necessary, and we therefore agree to affiliate to the People's Assembly Against Austerity and support the call for a national demonstration on 21 June. We also welcome the decision of the TUC to call a demonstration on 18 October on the theme of “Britain needs a pay rise.

## **Campaign to Oppose the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) -**

The TTIP is a new trade agreement taking place between the USA and the EU which will be incredibly damaging to the UK's social and environmental regulations, public services, and Labour rights and standards. It will create a body of law which sits above UK and even EU law, which will cement the recent Conservative and New Labour pro-market reforms, and in many cases (such as with the Conservative's privatisation measures in the NHS) will make them irreversible. Regulations, Government subsidies, and many other types of progressive legislation will, under this new scheme, be deemed “trade irritants” which have to be abolished. Multinational Corporations, under this new trade agreement, are raised to the legal status of nation-states. This will create a situation where Governments can be sued for billions of dollars simply for introducing new

regulations in the public interest. Examples of this have already taken place, such as when the Australian Government was sued for billions and made to reverse its ban on colour and branding on cigarette packages, which it implemented for public health reasons. Such occurrences will be commonplace under the TTIP, and will strip countries like the UK of much of the little democracy they have left.

Left Unity should start a high-profile campaign against the TTIP as soon as possible. This is because the parties involved are aiming to come to an agreement on this by the end of 2014.

## **ATOS**

Left Unity notes ATOS's incompetent and unjust mistreatment of people who received Incapacity Benefit in the past

We propose

1. That ATOS' role be abolished
2. That in so far as an assessment of particular individual needs is necessary it should be undertaken by properly qualified professional experts who are in full time work within the DWP.

## **Austerity & Destitution**

Austerity is a general term which describes a particular approach to managing the economy. Whilst we are against the whole ideology of austerity there are matters of such urgency that immediate calls need to be made to halt particular manifestations of the austerity programme as they are currently causing immense suffering and even loss of life.

Left unity therefore adopts as one of its immediate campaigning issues:

To make it illegal to leave a person destitute i.e. without any money to live on, whatever the circumstances of the person concerned.

## **Section 2 – Health and Housing**

### **Health**

#### **8. Draft statement of the Left Unity Health Policy Commission**

##### **Policies to improve health**

Move to minimise social and economic inequality. Every step that reduces inequality can be shown to improve the health of all parts of society. All Left Unity policies should consider their impact on the social determinants of health.

The development of new, and improvement of existing, social factors on health such as improved social housing, access to good education, healthy food, healthy environment, exercise facilities etc.

Healthcare planning and provision should include a focus on the social determinants of health as a means of preventing ill health. This means that resources should be distributed across the country according to the pattern of need.

Defence of the environment to minimise any health impacts.

Healthcare Policies

The NHS is central to healthcare provision. The following policies are vital to defend and improve it:

The Secretary of State for Health should be responsible for all NHS healthcare provision. Every part of the NHS should be defended as a publicly run, publicly owned system providing free care. Where this is not the case it should be reversed.

Access to health care should be universal and equitable.

Health care should be funded out of taxation (and borrowing where necessary – e.g. as GDP fluctuates annually).

Market forces have no place in state healthcare provision.

Better ways of integrating the provision of healthcare and social care should be investigated and implemented.

Health education ties the health system to the education system and should be developed as a form of co-operation between the two.

Healthcare provision and planning should be based on evidence and outcomes and excellence should be the norm.

Mental health services have been shamefully neglected over decades and need to be expanded and integrated into the broader NHS. Workforce planning and training of staff should be dependent upon the needs of the NHS.

Health care planning and provision should include a focus on workplace health and ensuring that the physical, chemical, biological and psychological risks in all workplaces are aggressively minimised.

A real weakness of the original NHS is that of poor democratic accountability. We need a modern system in which employees, councillors, patients and carers are represented on all appropriate health bodies. This should help to ensure that the NHS has the flexibility to ensure that local and regional needs are catered for.

In accordance with Left Unity policy, members must consider joining Keep Our NHS Public and other relevant bodies. They should also consider involvement in public health bodies like Clinical Commissioning Groups, Healthwatch and Hospital and other Trusts, the purpose being to defend the remains of an integrated service and resist commodification and especially privatisation at every opportunity.

As a long-term goal, we need to work towards a single integrated NHS. An integrated NHS would eliminate the so-called purchaser/provider split. This is a costly way to create an internal market. It sets parts of the NHS against each other to no good purpose and costs up to 14% of the entire NHS budget annually just to maintain.

The private pharmaceutical industry exploits patients and the NHS. Left Unity will campaign to expose the anti-social behaviour of Big Pharma, to restrict its powers, and ultimately to replace it with a non-profit and accountable system of pharmaceutical production. Towards that end, we will immediately ban pharmaceutical company representatives from NHS premises, where their only role is to distort clinical practice.

We will insist on the publication in full of all clinical trials data, past and present. We will aim to take Continuing Medical Education (for already qualified and experienced doctors) out of the hands of Big Pharma by providing publicly-funded alternatives. We will also seek to promote generic production of drugs and to challenge the monopolies created by

the current restrictive regime of Intellectual Property Rights. Towards that end we will seek to collaborate with other countries pursuing similar policies. We believe that private profit has no place and plays no positive role in the development and dissemination of drugs. Therefore we will aim to build publicly-owned alternatives to Big Pharma.

Health research is essential and the intense competition for funds should be scaled back. The money saved on sterile bidding for funding could be used to expand the total amount of research. Research has to be encouraged at all levels of provision and aimed where the NHS requires it. This goes from work on genetics to the study of the daily practice of GPs and community health workers.

Immediate Demands for discussion at Policy Conference:

Plan to re-instate, protect, and improve the NHS:

1. Repeal the Health and Social Care Act to restore the NHS as a publicly delivered, publicly funded and publicly accountable healthcare system, and re-establish the position of the Health Secretary as fully accountable for providing comprehensive health care. The most practical solution is to back Lord Owen's NHS re-instatement bill, which we fully support. (<http://www.opendemocracy.net/ournhs/david-owen/nhs-reinstatement-bill-and-explanatory-notes-updated>)

2. Re-instate the NHS as the preferred provider of healthcare. This will protect the NHS as a public service by minimising private sector takeover of NHS services

3. Abolish the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renegotiate and buy out contracts at realistic value.

Any publicly owned banks must cancel PFI contracts before re-privatisation. Stop and reverse the outsourcing of clinical and support services related to PFI projects.

4. Moratorium on A+E and hospital closures. Any reconfigurations must be clinically, not financially driven, and must show they have won public and professional support for alternative, improved services.

5. Reduce the Department of Health's reliance on expensive external management consultants who have too much influence on health policy. Instead the DH should re-engage with the representative bodies of frontline NHS professionals, as well as patient groups, to develop and plan future NHS policy in the most clinically effective and sustainable manner

6. Ensure evidenced-based adequate staff to patient ratios and bed numbers in order to maintain safe, effective, and high quality patient care.

7. Improve accountability and transparency of the NHS by empowering community health bodies and combining them with external peer review of hospitals and GP practices. Reviewing and strengthening the NHS complaints process and improving the ease of access, and protection for whistle blowers will also contribute to patient trust and confidence.

8. Use the purchasing power (monopoly status) of the NHS to improve NHS procurement practices in order to reduce costs of drugs, medical devices and general supplies.

Ensure those in charge of NHS purchasing power allocations have no conflict of interest arising from a financial benefit to be gained from selecting a particular product. E.g. they do not own shares in pharmaceutical companies, or other medical supply companies or corporations or trusts which support medical suppliers.

9. Strongly focus on dealing with the social determinants of health, such as poverty, income inequalities, unemployment, poor housing, social exclusion, lack of child care etc. Prioritise public health and social care.

10. Exempt the NHS from the EU/US Free Trade Agreement, which otherwise threatens to open up our healthcare system to irreversible privatisation

11. We will end cuts and privatisation in the health service. We will ensure that the NHS is fully-funded so that the needs of all patients can be met efficiently and promptly with

the best available treatments. We will cancel the PFI debts – relieving the NHS of a huge and unsustainable financial burden and ending this form of corporate exploitation of the taxpayer. We will reverse the decline in real wages of health service workers.

## **NHS Campaigns**

Left Unity members and branches will support and work within broad based campaigns to defend the NHS in a non-sectarian way. We should develop and encourage local support for such campaigns.

We should encourage local campaigns to understand the need for a national movement against cuts and privatisation of the NHS.

We agree to affiliate to and support Keep Our NHS Public.

We will produce and distribute our own material where appropriate, especially in situations where these campaigns do not have policy on questions we think are important and relevant. We will not seek to set up our own campaigning organisations where there are campaigns that we can work in. We think that only through joint action with others will we win some battles against this government, and we don't want to build 'party fronts'.

## **Defending the NHS**

The NHS is one of our greatest and most important institutions and must be defended from privatisation. Left Unity should campaign to:

- Bring the NHS back fully into democratic public ownership
- Reverse attacks on the provision of services
- Stop the closure of hospital departments, particularly A&Es
- Increase the number of healthcare professionals and NHS staff to ensure patients receive the care and treatment they deserve

Left Unity will work alongside campaign groups, doctors, nurses, healthcare professionals, NHS workers and trade unions to keep the NHS a universal healthcare provider free at the point of access to all.

## **Housing**

### **Housing crisis**

There are many aspects to the housing crisis in Britain:

- the bedroom tax
- relentless attacks on and removal from democratic control of social/council housing,
- the virtual end to the concept of housing based on social need,
- the cost and insecurity of private rental,
- the prevalence of short term, insecure lets which damage the construction of viable communities and impact on children's schooling,

- The enforced movement of people from their local areas to wherever available housing is cheapest, thus breaking the links with the community and support.
- The consequent human misery and disruption to Social Services and Educational requirements arising from forced movements of vulnerable people, the shortage of mortgages and the lack of affordable housing,
- the unequal demands for income between Buy to Let and home ownership mortgages
- the scandal of viable housing standing empty,
- the movement of right to buy houses into the private rental sector
- the use of housing as speculative capital once again,
- the rise in homelessness
- and the slowdown in the house building industry.

These all make housing a key policy issue for Left Unity.

### **House building**

A publicly-owned building corporation should be established, to ensure that planned targets for house-building are reached and to provide permanent trade union recognised employment and ongoing training for building workers. The capacity of local planning authorities must be supported and increased, including investment in training and education programmes for the planning sector.

### **Campaign issues**

Conference resolves that Left Unity should campaign for:

- Dignity in housing for all.
- The right to accommodation for all.
- The immediate end to the bedroom tax and support for campaigns (including direct action and organisation in the communities) to see the bedroom tax abolished.
- A publically owned and democratically controlled council house building programme funded by central government at minimal interest rates.

Conference therefore resolves to campaign on, and instructs future elected representatives to implement, the following:

- To increase the building and renovation of Council, and truly affordable housing to at least 250,000 units a year.
- Planning for housing to be within an overall town or city plan to ensure full access to social and recreational facilities for residents.
- Planning of housing to be linked to plans for schools and health care and to integrated provision for elders and to
- Provision of outside play areas for children close to family housing.
- Vacant accommodation should be brought into use, by compulsory purchase if necessary.
- Accommodation to be allocated on the basis of need, with right to life-long tenure and rents set at an affordable level within the living wage.
- The rights of short-term tenants in both public and private sector housing be protected with respect to length of rental contract and termination of tenancy
- Housing design to be aesthetically pleasing and to take account of existing designs of properties in the local area, with most social housing built to Parker Morris standards, with back and front gardens.

- Housing design to be eco-friendly and sustainably sourced and run, reducing the carbon footprint of all housing stock and improving energy efficiency. Heating for all houses to be included within a neighbourhood plan to aim for the most efficient use of fuel, including utilisation of solar, wind and ground source energy wherever possible, and to promote use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems.
- Planning to recognise the need to build accessible homes and provision to remodel older homes where needed to meet access issues
- To pilot the return of local authority building and renovation teams
- To work to develop effective housing plans for flood prone areas.
- Every home to be equipped with fire alarms and sprinklers.
- Rent control to be introduced on private landlords with rent increases only where necessity in the context of repairing and refitting the rented property, can be demonstrated.
- Housing rights and benefits for under-25 year olds, to be respected and previous caps reversed.
- The legal right to rent strikes to be reintroduced and tenants organisations to be facilitated.
- To work with co-ops within an overall local housing strategy.
- To provide housing for workers in the area in which they work
- To protect the communities and allow people to live near family or friends
- Local Authorities to be given the responsibility to safe guard standards in the private sector and to intervene where required
- Local Authorities to be responsible for regular inspection and approval of all rented properties with a grading given in relation to provided facilities, state of repairs and heat insulation.
- To provide legal aid for housing cases.
- To legalise squatting for emergency housing need or to bring vacant property back into use
- To reverse cuts in emergency accommodation with the creation of a diversity of units that meet all needs. To at least equalise income requirements between buy to let and home owner mortgages and to reverse all discrimination in favour of duty to let mortgages
- To use idle industrial capital to build sustainable and high quality prefabricated housing as part of an integrated plan to address housing shortage.
- Any private housing development be obliged to provide some affordable housing in the development

Left Unity calls for a radical reform of the planning system, nationalisation of development rights, the introduction of mandatory housing standards, a new National Spatial Plan to provide a coherent and holistic strategic approach to planning for major housing and infrastructure investment and a large scale state construction programme, in partnership with local authorities and local communities, focusing on the regeneration of urban areas. All surplus public sector land put to use in order to support the programme.

Left Unity's housing policies will respect the needs and struggles of LGBTQ people, many of whom are estranged from their families, and have been hit by cuts and will be forced on to the street if the Conservatives scrap housing benefit for the under 25s. Left Unity notes increasing homelessness and 'sofa surfing' by LGBTQ youth because of cuts in emergency accommodation and refuges. No one should ever have to sleep on the streets or sofa surf. To ensure that the needs of LGBTQ, the elderly from all communities, and other minority

groups are respected in housing and to build at least one LGBTQ shelter-extra care units in every major conurbation.

In the short run we want a crash course in house building and appropriation and renovation of empty properties, which will revive communities.

In the longer term, a determined program of building good houses for cheap rents will bring us up against the heart of the property relations of capital, mainly the private ownership of land and the commodification of property

Left Unity recognises that there is much more than house building needed to humanise and truly civilise our cities and wishes to work with international political campaign “The Right to the City”

To this end, we invite supporters of Left Unity and all campaigning for dignity in housing and our other demands to attend a meeting on this matter in Liverpool, the first city to develop social housing, but now one of the cities most damaged by the government’s policies.

## **Section 3 – Europe & Migration**

### **Migration Policy**

1. Migrants and refugees face a sustained offensive which began under the last Labour government and has further intensified with the Tory-led coalition. There is a campaign of vilification by mainstream politicians, which fuels the rise of UKIP and the far-right. This is cheered on by the right-wing media’s scare stories about Romanians and Bulgarians “flooding into Britain”.
2. Migrants and refugees have had their rights to benefits, housing, health, work, and legal representation removed or restricted. An ever-widening number of professionals and landlords are expected to act as “immigration spies”, legally obliged to check the immigration status of their clients.
3. There are moves to set caps on non-EU immigration and talk by the government of re-negotiating Britain’s relationship with the European Union to bring an end to freedom of movement.
4. Many of these measures are contained in the proposed Immigration Bill and some proposals are even being rushed in ahead of the Bill becoming law. Raids on migrants at home, in places of employment, cafes, social events continue and are being carried out more publically, sometimes with embedded media coverage, in order to spread fear across migrant communities.
5. This situation will worsen in the run up to the European and local authority elections in May 2014. The success of UKIP in the May 2013 local elections, fought openly and unashamedly on an anti-immigration ticket, has pushed immigration up the political agenda.
6. Labour and the Tories have reacted by competing with each other over their anti-immigration rhetoric. This creates a predictable vicious circle that boosts the chances of UKIP and strengthens the right per se.
7. While there is a long-term trend in British society that has been hostile to immigration since the 1960s, attitudes over the last decade have dangerously hardened. According to the *British Social Attitudes Survey* in 2003 some 33 per cent of people believed



immigration had a negative social impact. But by 2011 this had risen to some 48 per cent. Some 75 per cent of respondents advocated a reduction in immigration with 51 per cent wanting 'a large reduction'.

8. But other data shows that responses to questions about immigration depend heavily on how the question is posed. Even those who buy into anti-immigration rhetoric can also be won to arguments based on fairness and working class solidarity; that they enjoy freedoms to move and work overseas that should not be denied to others, that the global super-rich enjoy near total freedom of movement across the world's borders that is denied to the poor and marginalised, etc.
9. The self organisation of black and other migrant communities over decades is also important in undercutting racism and anti-migrant sentiment. While individual anti-deportation campaigns can have the limitation of being seen as special pleading they also act to mobilise people in a positive way. The work done by Lambeth Left Unity in support of the Jermaine Strachan campaign was exemplary.
10. Left Unity completely rejects all anti-immigration arguments and rhetoric. We believe mass migration has had, and always will have, an overwhelmingly positive impact on society. We recognise and respect the extraordinary sacrifices that people have made and continue to make to come to Britain, and we unreservedly defend their right to stay, to bring their families, and to build a new life for themselves.
11. Migration transforms the nature of the working class for the better, bringing experiences of global struggles, and opening up new and exciting avenues for cultural and artistic change.
12. Migration has an impact in breaking down many, but by no means all, racist myths and stereotypes. There is a strong anti-racist sentiment in many of Britain's major cities that is a consequence of decades of struggle by ethnic minority communities against racism. Like on so many other issues there is simply no pro-migration, anti-racist voice in party politics shaping the agenda.
13. The labour force today is bigger than ever, but capitalism still does not provide jobs for all those able and willing to work. This has nothing to do with immigration but is entirely based on the 'artificial scarcity' that capitalism creates when there are too many people looking for work than can be profitably employed in the market place. A reduction in the working week with no loss of pay is a solution to the scourge of unemployment in the interests of working class people, restrictions on migration ultimately serve the interests of the bosses.
14. For all these reasons, Left Unity believes that there can be no "fair" or "non-racist" immigration controls. We are opposed to immigration controls. We are opposed to all laws which make people illegal because of who they are, where they or their parents were born, the colour of their skin, what language they speak, and so on.
15. We believe that it is in the interests of the working class as a whole, migrant and non-migrant, in Britain and internationally, to have equal rights to move across borders, to settle in other countries, and to bring their families with them if they choose to do so.
16. Insofar as the right to 'freedom of movement' exists, however imperfectly, in the EU states as a result of binding international agreements, we defend them trenchantly and without equivocation.
17. These circumstances present Left Unity with important duties in the immediate period.
  - A) Anti Cuts Campaigns: Bring these issues and migrant voices into campaigns against the cuts, defence of the health service, housing etc. The ruling class tries to divide us - saying they are saving services and resources for the "indigenous" people by excluding the "foreigners". We need to say "we are all in it together" and ensure that these campaigns do likewise.

- B) Support campaign(s) to stop the Immigration Bill.
- C) Elections 2014: Be a strong pro-migrant voice during the 2014 election campaigns. Where we have candidates they should make it a priority to challenge the reactionary line that is coming from the other parties. But we can challenge these even without candidates. We should produce pro-migrant materials and distribute these, take our arguments to hustings, put out press releases and letters to local papers where this nonsense is circulating.
- D) Defiance not Compliance. The government proposals and existing controls can only work if professionals comply with them. Already we have seen the opposition by health professionals to it is being proposed. Left Unity needs to campaign for the trade unions not only to oppose these proposals but support workers in refusing to carry them out.
- E) No to privatisation. The Government is outsourcing immigration controls to organisations such as G4S who have an appalling track record on human rights including the death of Jimmy Mubenga who they were trying to deport. While we campaign against the whole immigration machine in so far as it exists it should be in public hands
- F) Challenge ideas in the labour movement, and even sections of the socialist movement, that openly support or implicitly endorse the idea of “British Jobs for British Workers”. Immigration controls divide and weaken the working class and therefore against the interests of all workers

### **Left Unity’s European work**

We note the recent 4<sup>th</sup> Congress of the European Left Party the final political document of which stated:

*“The global crisis of capitalism, after decades of accumulation of profits and massive redistribution of wealth and power in favour of capital, affects in one way or another every country and every aspect of social life. Extreme austerity policies, shrinking and precarious employment, privatization of public goods and companies, destruction of a large part of the productive forces, dramatic reduction in the Welfare State, weakening of democratic institutions, strengthening of repression and emergency powers have all been employed to maintain the dominance of capital and global profitability.*

*The situation has become unsustainable for the peoples of Europe. Austerity and authoritarianism are applied as part of the European oligarchies’ strategy to dominate the peoples...*

*Today, crucial choices have to be made. There will be no maintaining of the status quo or going backwards. If the current choices are upheld, the EU will increasingly be reduced to an authoritarian management board and producer of social regression, threatening any idea of solidarity and European justice. We propose a break in order to found a new European project, one which is based on the interests of the peoples and respect for their sovereignty, in order to restore a sense of meaning to European integration.*

*For us, there is no question of waiting for the European Union to crumble, and for the monsters that could emerge from the rubble, nor of promoting nationalist solutions setting the peoples against one another. The European Left, which we represent, is internationalist and stands together in solidarity. We strive towards a socialist alternative, a civilisation freed from capitalism, exploitation, oppression and capitalist violence. Ours is a vision that guarantees not only a distribution of wealth that supports work and an advanced social and economic development model, but also democracy, equality, democratic and social rights for all European citizens.*

*It is to this end that we fight for a re-foundation of Europe, in other words, for a new definition of its objectives, policies and structures; an economic, productive, social and ecological model that is totally different, and that is based on solidarity, social justice and popular sovereignty.”*

Left Unity supports this call for a re-foundation of Europe, on a socialist basis, and commits to working to this end in solidarity and internationalism with the European Left Party and other anti-capitalist left forces in Europe.

There is no question that the EU is an anti-working class institution and we support the struggles against the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, the Fourth Railway Package and other ongoing neo-liberal attacks which are intrinsic to the EU.

## **European Union**

Left Unity opposes all programmes and demands for a British withdrawal from the European Union. By the same measure we oppose the EU of commissioners, corruption and capital. However, as the political, bureaucratic and economic elite has created the reality of a confederal EU, the working class should take it, not the narrow limits of the nation-state, as its decisive point of departure.

The constituent national parts of the EU exhibit a definite commonality due to geography, culture, history, economics and politics. Put another way, the EU is not an empire kept together by force. Nor is it just a trading bloc. Far from capitalism pushing through what is objectively necessary - the unity of Europe - on the contrary capitalism has held back European unification.

For the working class that necessitates organising at an EU level: campaigns, trade unions, cooperatives, for the levelling up of working conditions and wages across Europe to the best status quo currently in force, and the fight for extreme democracy.

Left Unity wants not a quasi-democratic, confederal EU, but a united Europe under the rule of the working class.

- Power to the European parliament. Replace the EU commission by an executive democratically responsible to the parliament. Abolish the Council of Ministers.
- For a democratically controlled European Central Bank.
- Towards indivisible European unity.
- For the free movement of people. Against all immigration controls

Naturally, to the degree the working class extends its power over the EU it will exercise attraction for the oppressed peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Such a bloc would be able to face down all threats and quickly spread the flame of universal liberation.

## **Section 4 – Electoral Strategy**

### **Electoral strategy**

Electoral support for a new left party will only advance to the extent that it is genuinely representative of working class communities, has no interests separate from theirs, and is an organic part of the campaigns and movements which they generate and support. It will

engage electoral processes as appropriate, offering voters a left alternative, while understanding that elections are not the only arena or even the most important arena in which political struggles are fought.

Mindful of this, this conference calls upon the incoming leadership (or whatever term we are using for this) to establish a committee to be tasked with liaising with local Left Unity structures with a remit to, though not exclusively limited to:

1. Liaise with local structures in order to assess the viability of an electoral campaign in their area;
2. Identifying, in conjunction with the wider membership, possible key target constituencies;
3. Facilitate a discussion between the wider membership on which elections we should, in the short to medium term, engage in;
4. Assist local structures in building up their electoral capacity;
5. Take a national view of state of our organisation and made recommendations as to how local structures can assist and reinforce each other in terms of electoral work with a view to ensuring that we maximise our resources;
6. Carry out a skills audit of our membership with a view to identifying those who have prior experience of elections in order to facilitate the passing on of these skills to the wider membership through a co-ordinated training program;
7. Begin the process of drafting materials such as canvass sheets for national use.

This conference, furthermore, calls upon all local Left Unity structures to begin the process of building their electoral capacity. Such work may include, but not exclusively:

- Identifying possible target constituencies at Local Government level;
- Identifying potential election candidates;
- Building the public profile of Party activists;
- Beginning the process of obtaining electoral registers and other relevant data;
- Devising local campaigns which both raise our profile and ensure we remain rooted within, and relevant to, local communities.

This conference accepts that candidates should only be fielded where a political base of support exists within the community and where the human and financial resources exist to make a genuine and locally representative campaign viable.

### **Electoral strategy**

Left Unity should open discussions with other left groups, coalitions and parties to avoid electoral clashes and move towards electoral pacts – with the initial aim of creating the largest ever left challenge in the 2015 General Election

## **Section 5 – Miscellaneous**

### **Edward Snowden - Glasgow Left Unity**

This Founding Conference of Left Unity supports the actions of Edward Snowden and others in revealing the extent of efforts of the US NSA and GCHQ to monitor the online activities of much of the world's population.

This conference believes that the activity of GCHQ and the NSA is in effect a conspiracy to extract as much material as possible from internet traffic with the principle aim of acting against the working class and the oppressed throughout the world. The mouthpieces of the spooks use the catchall "terrorism" to justify their activities, but clearly the ruling class is far

more worried about workers and others organising against repressive regimes and savage attacks on living standards.

This Conference resolves to send a message of support to Edward Snowden and to join the fight for him to be offered asylum and safe haven from the torturers and killers of the US military and security agencies.

This Conference also resolves to campaign for the closure of GCHQ as a dangerous anti-working class institution with a worldwide reach. In addition this Conference is in favour of GCHQ's archives being opened for public inspection and investigation.

## **Section 6 – Trade Union Strategy**

### **Trade Union Strategy**

Left Unity needs to clarify its relationship to organised labour, work within the grassroots of the trade union movement, and develop policies that links the crisis of working class representation to the development of a rank and file trade unionism.

Following Conference, we agree to call a national meeting of Left Unity trade union activists to help develop policies and strategies on how to organise and build trade unions and win support for Left Unity across trade unions, in workplaces and in branches.

Further we agree that national trade union fractions (meetings of Left Unity members in the different unions) should discuss and agree on building rank and file initiatives in the different unions. This could be achieved either through participation in existing initiatives or through the development of new ones, according to our trade union members views. We would agree also that this activity should be discussed in the branches where the promotion of local trade union work can be discussed, facilitated and supported.

### **Trade Unions**

Left Unity supports workers organisation and Trade Unions.

Left Unity members are very strongly encouraged to join a trade union. Trade union members are also encouraged to take part in Trades Councils.

We support the full participation of members in their trade unions and workers organisation in the workplace.

Left Unity vigorously opposes the anti-trade union legislation imposed by a series of Tory and Labour governments, by the European Union and by UK and European courts.

## **Section 7 – Environment**

### **Fracking**

This conference notes:

1. That the government is committed to extreme energy, exposing 64% of UK territory to unconventional fossil fuel extraction. In the process it has cut subsidies for onshore wind, solar and efficiency measures which would reduce UK carbon emissions.
2. That Nottingham University conducted a survey illustrating unconventional energy extraction has no social licence in the UK with less than 1 in 4 supporting the plans.
3. That the government are cutting 80,000 pages of regulation and guidance; 74% of the rules governing the UK environment, in the face of Cuadrilla having legally disposed of two million gallons of radioactive waste into the Manchester Ship Canal.

This conference believes:

1. That hydraulic fracturing (fracking) and all other types of extreme energy extraction should be banned in the UK.
2. That a sustainable energy future depending on renewables (including tidal, wave, geothermal, solar and wind power) is achievable.
3. That environmental regulations and guidance protect the living spaces of the community, the health of workers and prevent the industrialisation of our countryside.

This conference resolves:

1. To support local communities opposed to fracking and other forms of extreme energy generation.
2. As a direct challenge to the austerity agenda, to campaign for the creation of one million climate jobs by calling for investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency.
3. To campaign for rescindment to all cuts in environmental regulation with the aim of protecting the environment, workers' health and living spaces of the community.

## **Section 8 – Anti-Racism and Internationalism/National Question**

### **Anti-Racism**

## **Towards a Left Unity Anti-Racism Policy - Anti-Racism Policy Group**

### **Britain's new racism**

1. There has been a dangerous upsurge in racism in Britain in approximately the last decade, most recently compounded by the Woolwich killing. This has included a rise in racist attacks on the Muslim community, the rise (and subsequent fall) of the English Defence League, the recent electoral breakthrough of UKIP, and a secular increase in the everyday, pernicious racism of name calling and street abuse that blights the daily lives of racially oppressed groups, despite all the progress that has been won through struggle over the last decades. This is all the more worrying given the longer-term trend towards a rise in fascist sentiment and support for xenophobic parties across Europe. The British state has played a decisive role in the articulation of new forms of racism in Britain, whether with respect to immigration, or the disciplining of Muslim populations under the rubric of 'British values', 'British jobs for British workers', or Cameron's 'muscular liberalism'. The mainstream parties, working through the state, have both entrenched repressive policies such as greater surveillance and policing of Muslims, harsher controls of asylum and immigration and hard racialised crackdowns in the wake of the England riots, and simultaneously promoted the idea that racial minorities either represent a security threat, or are failing to 'integrate' into 'Britishness'. This has made life harder for those oppressed by racism, but it has also contributed to the danger represented by the far right, by validating their narratives and policy talking points. As austerity bites, hitting the racially oppressed much harder than others, the idea that the poorest and most oppressed only have themselves to blame for their situation is gaining currency, adding to the acceptability of racism.
2. Anti-migrant stances pervade our media and culture. In 2014 migrants and refugees are facing a sustained offensive against them, which began under the last Labour government but has further intensified with the Tory-led coalition. There is a campaign of vilification by politicians across the mainstream, which has fuelled the rise of the racist right, intersecting with right-wing media scare stories about Romanians and Bulgarians "flooding into Britain". There is a campaign against their ability to live in the UK removing or restricting rights to benefits, housing, health, work, and legal representation. An ever-widening number of professionals and landlords are expected to act as "immigration spies", legally obliged to check the immigration status of their clients. There are also moves to set caps on non-EU immigration and talk by the government of re-negotiating Britain's relationship with Europe to bring an end to the freedom of movement. Many of these measures are contained in the proposed Immigration Bill and some proposals are even being rushed in ahead of the Bill becoming law. Raids on migrants at home, in places of employment, cafes, social events continue and are being carried out more publicly, sometimes with imbedded media coverage, in order to spread fear into migrant communities. These measures have are not only racist, but have a clear class significance. They constitute an attack on the free movement of labour, in an era when the mobility of capital is actively championed. They also, as we have seen with the 3cosas campaign by migrant cleaners in Senate House, work to divide labour, weaken its bargaining power and reduce its cost to employers.
3. Racism against Muslims has deep roots in British history, extending into the colonial era. Its most recent manifestations can be traced to the period after the 'Rushdie affair' when Muslims were increasingly identified as a 'security' problem, and a menace to national 'values'. Following the riots in northern cities, the government extended this attack to British Asians in general, alleging that they were 'self-segregating'. In the context of the 'war on terror', these discourses about British

Asians were focused on Muslims in particular, and a neo-Powellite argument took hold that 'multiculturalism' had failed. Politicians and media outlets claimed that by allowing diverse 'cultures' to 'do their own thing', Britain had tolerated islands of extremism in its midst. This counterinsurgency narrative validated a series of high profile attacks on the rights of Muslims, such as the Forest Gate raids in 2006 or the long-term imprisonment without charge and subsequent deportation of Babar Ahmad and Talha Ahsan - only the most severe examples of the day-to-day state repression and racism experienced by the Muslim community. The language of this 'new racism' blames racially oppressed groups themselves for failing to 'integrate' or 'confront extremism'. In so doing, it both validates racist repression and simultaneously instils fear and discourages resistance to racism. The fact that it is culture and creed, rather than colour and breed, which is the ideological focus of these measures, allows politicians to pretend that they are not racist. Yet, there is a long history of 'cultural racism', which has become especially dominant in the aftermath of Britain's colonial era. Even the most biologicistic forms of racism have always been supplemented by essentialising cultural stereotypes. The representation of Muslims as a monolithic bloc embodying the most hateful characteristics belongs to this tradition.

4. Racism, national chauvinism and imperialism have been tied to capitalism from its beginning. The slave trade and the colonization of India went hand in hand with the industrial revolution and were justified through racism and national chauvinism. The struggles against imperialism and the struggles against racism in the countries of the core have inspired and stood in solidarity with one and other; the slogans of the American civil rights movement were used in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Ireland. It is imperialist aggression, the hardships of capitalism in the 'periphery', and nature of the global division of labour that has driven immigration to the 'core' countries in the West. We recognise that we cannot fight racism without fighting imperialism, and we cannot fight imperialism without fighting racism.
5. In electoral politics, the most immediate threat is represented by UKIP, particularly as it gears up for the local authority elections in May. UKIP is an unstable alliance of traditional Conservative supporters, reactionary malcontents and the far right. Its racism emanates logically from its commitment to a 'Britishness' which is both xenophobic, and authoritarian. Defending Britain from the EU, as they see it, also means heavily controlled borders and a well-policed interior with racial minorities kept in their place. This is linked to the insecurity experienced by sections of the middle and working classes arising from the global economic downturn, and the desire to control its effects by disciplining the poor and fortifying the sovereignty and authority of the state. One of the major strategic objectives of UKIP is to shift parliamentary politics, and the wider media discourse, to the right. In this endeavour, it has had some success, as the Tory Right has felt emboldened to pressure Cameron on immigration while Farage's omnipresence in the media has given the party's talking points some public legitimacy. Neither of the mainstream parties can effectively act as a counterpoint to UKIP because they share certain fundamental assumptions with UKIP and have, themselves, been staking out a share of the same racist terrain.

### **Left Unity's anti-racist agenda**

6. Left Unity entirely rejects all of the "received wisdoms" of the new racism about Muslims, ethnic minorities, migrants and migrants that have increasingly become socially acceptable. We also recognise that the fight against racism cannot be reduced to the anti-fascist struggle. The comforting fiction that 'we are all anti-racist except the fascists' leaves the mainstream infrastructure of racism upon which the far right thrives unchallenged. The everyday racism of the media and major parties



provides legitimacy for the violent actions of groups like the EDL and BNP. A new anti-racist politics is therefore urgently needed. It is this common sense A new party of the left worthy of the name must go on a *general offensive* against racism, allying with the social forces already engaged in that work, particularly the racially oppressed and migrant groups.

7. We recognise in particular the importance of developing policies that are based on: (a) policies which attack the systematic and structural disadvantages and discrimination faced by racially oppressed groups; (b) opposition to all attempts to curtail or restrict the freedom of movement in Europe, and complete opposition to all immigration controls as divisive, racist, and anti-working class; (c) self-organisation – in line with Left Unity’s commitment to liberation politics, we support the principle of self-organisation, and believe black leadership of the movement is key to defeating racism.
8. Widespread racism about migrants does not simply arise on the basis of myths and falsehoods, but it is particularly effective when such falsehoods can be insinuated into the daily experiences and existing ideology of ordinary people. In order to challenge anti-migrant racism, therefore, it will be necessary to challenge myths with facts and alternative arguments. However, that will not be sufficient – we also need to present a positive agenda on immigration, linked to a wider anti-racist politics. Left Unity believes that immigration controls are inherently unjust and racist. They are part of the global management of labour along racist lines which inevitably brutalise the poorest workers while in fact weakening the collective interests and bargaining power of workers. As such, we are opposed to immigration control, as we are opposed to any laws which make people illegal because of who they are, where they or their parents were born, the colour of their skin, or what language they speak. And we insist that it is in the interests of the working class as a whole, migrant and non-migrant, in Britain and internationally, to have equal rights to move across borders, to settle in other countries, and to bring their families with them if they choose to do so. Insofar as these rights exist, however imperfectly, in the EU states as a result of binding international agreements, we defend them trenchantly and without equivocation.
9. Structural oppression is felt differently by intersecting groups, so women in BME communities face increased sexism as a result of racist policies. This means our policy in Left Unity should recognise the particular affect policies targeting refugees have had on women. We should support a new generation of grassroots campaigns by forging links with black led organisations, such as Women for Women Refugees, who are fighting to put an end to the detention of women and girls. The majority of women claiming asylum are survivors of sexual violence. Women in BME communities experience racism and sexism, so we need to fight to defend specialist services offering support for survivors of sexual violence. We recognise that women are the primary carers of children, and we must fight to put an end to policy that does not take account of where women have networks and have established themselves in communities, when granting refugee and discretionary leave status to women. Women claiming asylum must not be separated from their friends and their communities. However, whilst we fight to ensure women have the support of their own networks, in terms of looking after children, we must also insist on childcare provision at every level of organisation within Left Unity.
10. For all the negatives in the British situation, there are grounds for optimism. Popular views on immigration and race are actually far more complex and ambivalent than opinion polls would suggest. The ambiguities of popular opinion are, moreover, not a concluded fact but raw material which can be worked with by those seeking to draw

out the best instinctive responses of ordinary people. Anti-racism actually forms part of the common sense of millions of working class people who, thanks to decades of large-scale immigration, experience a 'lived multicultural' that is remote from the stereotypes of 'failed multiculturalism'. A left political articulation that operates on such lived experience, linking a popular anti-racist politics to a wider critique of class injustice, can begin to shift the balance, and offer a counterpoint to the racist Right which the mainstream parties cannot.

11. In this situation Left Unity is presented with important duties.

- a. Left Unity commits itself to working with the new generation of grassroots campaigns from these communities. Black led organisations like women for women refugees, agitation like that against police brutality and racist prison practices, community self defence initiatives like those against fascists and chauvinists, should be supported. Left Unity should be a natural home for the people active in these. A black led group of members should be elected to bridge the gap between left unity and these campaigns. Left Unity is committed to supporting the black and oppressed led campaign against racism and chauvinism.
- b. Anti-cuts activism. The major political battles in Britain in the coming years will be about the brutal paring down of public service and welfare, and the redistribution of resources to the rich. Whether it affects housing, healthcare, labour rights or municipal services, this will harm women and the racially oppressed more, and the accompanying ideological headwinds will make solidarity between those suffering its effects more difficult to achieve. Not only that, but the beneficiaries of austerity, primarily the capitalist class and its political allies, will tend to defend their gains by arguing that the real threat to services comes from 'foreigners' taking over the resources of 'indigenous people'. Any anti-austerity movement with any chance of success must therefore be persuaded to foreground the issue of anti-racism, to argue that working class people, of whatever background, are indeed all in it together and have a shared interest in defeating the racists.
- c. Union campaigns. Trade unions are essential to any effective movement against racism. This is because of their ability to unite workers in their shared interests, regardless of background, because they can offer protection and solidarity to the most vulnerable workers who often happen to be migrant workers, and because they are part of a wider labour movement that takes an interest in opposing racism. Left Unity should support and participate in the Unite-sponsored march against racism, but also build support within unions for migrant workers' struggles such as the 3cosas campaign.
- d. Support campaign(s) to stop the Immigration Bill.
- e. Elections. Where Left Unity chooses to stand, it must be a strong pro-migrant voice. Candidates must make it a priority to challenge the reactionary line that is coming from the other parties, to articulate the principled anti-racist line that most other parties cannot or will not. Where we don't stand candidates, we can and should produce pro-migrant materials and distribute these, taking our arguments to hustings and local newspapers.
- f. Defiance not Compliance. The government proposals and existing controls can only work if professionals comply with them. Already we have seen the

opposition by health professionals to it is being proposed. Left Unity needs to campaign for the trade unions not only to oppose these proposals but support workers in refusing to carry them out.

- g. No to privatisation. The Government is outsourcing immigration controls to organisations such as G4S who have an appalling track record on human rights including the death of Jimmy Mubenga who they were trying to deport. However, this does not mean that these things should be “in house”. We are opposed to the whole immigration “service”. The state should not be able to absolve themselves of their dirty work by handing over the provision of racist controls to the private sector.
- h. Racists view on the left. Left Unity must challenge racist ideas in the labour movement, and even sections of the socialist movement. Some openly support or implicitly endorse the idea of “British Jobs for British Workers” – the supposed need for greater and “tougher” immigration controls to defend worker’s rights. Left Unity must contest this wherever it appears.

## **Internationalism/National Question**

### **Internationalism**

1. Left Unity is committed to maintaining and deepening the unity of the working class in Britain.
2. Left Unity welcomes its growing membership in Scotland and Wales. Left Unity will do everything it can to encourage members in Scotland and Wales to play a full part in building a party based on the principles of class solidarity, socialism, internationalism and human freedom.
3. Left Unity recognizes that to effectively fight back against the austerity Tory-Lib Dem government and a crisis-ridden capitalism requires an international strategy.
4. Left Unity will support and seek to take a lead in all moves towards organising the working class in Europe and internationally.