

## **Left Unity National Council**

*Minutes of the meeting held Birmingham 14 July 2016.*

Attendance: Kate H, Andrew B, Fred LeP, Felicity D, Susan P, Bob W-F, Stuart K, Joseph H, Doug T, Richard F, Sharon McC, Darren McC, Pete McL, Alison T, Len A, Anna B, John P, Janet G, Graham G, Stephen H

Observers: Bob W, Robert B

Apologies: Eve T, Olly N, Terry C, Bianca T, Nick J, Kath, Martin, Alice K, Jon D, Julie M

Chairs: Doug T, Richard F, Kate H; Minutes Len A.

Matthew Caygill a comrade from Leeds, had recently died suddenly. Andrew B spoke about Matthew's long commitment to the struggle for socialism and how he combined this with a concern for others, one of his last acts being an expression of personal solidarity with a German neighbour following the referendum result. Pete G will write a longer obituary.

### 1. Minutes of the NC held 23 April 2016.

- i. They were agreed as a correct record following the addition of a decision to establish a LU Developments in Social Care group (Bob, Olly and Eve).
- ii. Matters arising: Rosa Luxemburg Foundation conference postponed.

### 2. Minutes of the NE held 21 May 2016

- i. These were noted and no further report was required.

### 3. Minutes of the NE held 18 June 2016

- i. Point 2 Referendum campaign – secretary reported that bullet point 6 “That we focus our work on a pro-immigrant anti-racist action plan and a worker’s rights action plan” would be discussed for agreement later on agenda.
- ii. Point 3 Lambeth local elections – questions were raised about the implications of the decision relating to LU members standing on a broad anti-cuts ticket. It was explained that this was in line with current policy and allowed Manchester comrades to explore this possibility in relation to the new election for mayor. This position was endorsed.
- iii. Point 4 National Conference – this was to be discussed later in the agenda. Points were raised in relation to 4b and 4c the Standing Orders Committee and LU Constitutional Commission.

Following a discussion it was noted that constitutionally no NC member could be a member of the SOC; in light of an understaffed SOC it was agreed that a SOC of three directly elected members would be sufficient and if further help is required members of NC could be endorsed, excluding officers, to provide administrative help. It was also agreed that the job description of the SOC would be used in future.

It was reported that additional places on the LU Constitutional Commission were out for election. The CC would work within the decision of the last conference

aiming to produce a spread sheet of recommendations via email and then meet to decide on recommendations. It was emphasised that a code of conduct was not part of the CC work and other comrades are following this up.

#### 4. Post referendum discussion

- i. Tory leadership and far right implications – report given by Felicity D
- ii. Post Brexit implications and LU response – report given by Andrew B
- iii. A motion from the Stockport branch was moved by John P

“National Council notes with concern comments made by Len McCluskey, General Secretary of Unite and by Tom Watson, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, to the effect that the Labour Party should change its policy on supporting free movement of labour within the European Single Market.

It furthermore notes with concern that the statement issued by the Shadow Chancellor, John McDonnell, setting out Labour’s ‘red lines’ on Brexit negotiations does not include insistence upon freedom of movement of labour should Britain seek access to the Single Market following withdrawal from EU membership.

It resolves to vigorously oppose, in any ways possible, policy changes by trade unions and by the Labour Party which do not support the principle of freedom of movement”.

A wide ranging discussion took place based around the reports and the motion.

- iv. The Labour Party and support for Corbyn – report given by Stewart K

A wide ranging discussion took place based around this report and relating back to those given previously.

v. Decisions:

- a. The Stockport motion was agreed unanimously.
- b. It was agreed that NC members would not vote in the Corbyn election.
- c. Our campaigning priorities were agreed as defending free movement; workers rights and opposing austerity.

There were no other formal motions but indicative votes against were taken on the need for an immediate general election and a split in the Labour Party.

#### 5. International

The secretary gave a report on stepping up our European work and key dates and that our observer membership had been approved by the council of chairpersons.

Bloco conference in Portugal – written report tabled by Terry C

i. EL Council of Chairpersons met early in July and approved a campaigning strategy which included proposals to open up to a wider political forum and for 'convergence' work; quicker acting Presidency; and an annual EL general assembly.

A new version of the political strategy going to the December congress was approved and has been sent to us for comments which will be considered at the October meeting of the Executive Board of which we are members.

Current campaign focus: supporting Portugal in opposing EU austerity measures; defending immigrants and refugees; opposing TTIP and austerity.

ii. We are working toward an EL conference in London and an EL tour of branches.

iii. It was agreed:

a. Our 'Europe Innit' free movement cards are produced in different languages as before.

b. We cover workers' struggles in Europe more extensively with the TU group taking this forward together with a motion to the next EC.

c. We support the EL tour and conference in the Autumn.

d. Len A and Felicity D are our delegates to the EL Executive Board in October and Joseph H our delegate to the East European conference.

## 6. LU National Conference

i. Conference timetable as in the 18 June EC minutes was considered. An amendment was agreed with the 16 September also being the deadline for Commission and NC reports and 14 October the deadline for emergency motions. The latter point was to help members and branches cover any decision made at the September Labour Party conference.

The timetable was agreed as amended.

ii. Suggestions were made for non-binding sessions on Sunday such as a social media workshop; the housing crisis; development of our economic analysis. It was also suggested that Eventbrite could be used to attract support for these sessions.

## 7. Reports

i. Trade Union Commission meeting on 25 June 2016 – a verbal report was given.

a. It was agreed that an updating census was required of LU trade union membership. It was also suggested that we should consider establishing an education and Unite trade union group of LU members.

b. A message of support to teachers in Mexico was endorsed.

c. Questions were raised about the TU Commission abiding by conference policy. It was agreed that the two views on this position would be circulated to members of the NC and TU Commission for discussion.

ii. Membership. Richard F had produced a report for the meeting with a regional breakdown and analysis. Membership was roughly stable at around 1230 but with

considerable churn. Andrew B reported that the situation was fragile, recognising that many wanted to support Corbyn but also stay in contact.

a. It was agreed that as a consequence we should develop and promote our Friends of Left Unity website.

b. It was agreed that an updated version of our “what LU is about” including a new membership form would be produced.

c. ‘Europe Innit’ placards and cards were available as well as Turkish/Kurdistan pamphlet.

d. All were reminded of the 18 July Trident Parliamentary vote and protests around the country.

iii. Finance. A written report was made available. It indicated that our bank balance was stable at £3373.00 and that £100 had been made available to branches that had bank accounts.

#### 8. Next meetings

EC 13 August 2016 and 17 September 2016 venues to be confirmed