

## **Left Unity - EC Meeting: 17 May 2015**

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**Present:** Kerry A, Len A (Wales), Andrew B, Matthew C, Terry C, Marianne C-J (Eastern), Siobhan D (Scotland), Felicity D, Richard F (LGBTQ caucus), Pete G, Simon H, Guy H, Kate H, Brigitte L(North West), Sharon McC, Oliver N, Susan P (Women's Caucus), Barbara S (South West), Doug T (London), Eve Turner, David T (West Mids), Tom W

**Apologies:** Kathy L, Kath O (Yorks and Humberside), Liz S (East Mids), Bianca T, Micheline M

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### **AGENDA:**

**12:00 – 1:00: Item one:** General Election - political assessment and analysis (inc. contributions from Andrew, Siobhan (Scotland) and Len (Wales) (papers from Len)

**1:00 – 1:30: Item two:** Left Unity's general and local election results - assessment and analysis - Terry

**1:30 – 2:00: LUNCH**

**2:00 – 3:00: Item three:** Political and campaigning priorities following election inc. our political intervention and mobilisation for PAAA demo – Simon (motion) Olly – TUs (report), Felicity on housing, EU referendum issue

**3:00 – 3:30: Item four:** Follow up from NC decisions inc. proposal for open NC agenda and short report on weekly office group meetings (verbal) – Kate

**3:30 – 3:45: TEA**

**3:45 – 5:00: Item five:** Items left over from NC agenda:

Branches Report (circulated)

Finance (Andrew)

Correspondence (Kate)

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\*\*\*\*\* Main Upcoming Dates\* \*\*\*

- (1) 20<sup>th</sup> June 'End Austerity Now' march in London
    - Campaign material needed and prior organization
  - (2) 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> June – NC Meeting – London (Saturday open)
  - (3) Solidarity with Unions Day Event – Summer 2015 –
    - Oliver N and team organizing
  - (4) Economics Day School – Early October 2015
    - Pete G organizing
  - (5) Autumn National/Constitutional Conference – 24<sup>th</sup>/25<sup>th</sup> October 2015
    - Kerry A, Terry C, Kate H and Susan P for CAC
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### **Item One: General Election – Political Assessment and Analysis**

**Discussion introduced by Andrew B with extended contributions from Siobhan on Scotland and Len on Wales.**

**Noted that further discussion and debate would take place at open NC and subsequent NC meeting.**

### **Item Two: General Election – Left Unity's general and local election results**

**Discussion introduced by Terry C (LU nominating officer):**

*Item Three: Political and Campaigning Priorities Following Election*

**Motion introduced by Simon H. Following discussion, motion agreed in principle subject to revision and online agreement by EC, for publication as an EC statement:**

So now we have a Tory government claiming a mandate for billions of pounds of cuts, the repeal of the Human Rights Convention, advocating within the EU of deporting hundreds of thousands of refugees and new anti-union laws, that will effectively abolish the right to strike for workers “in essential services”, in the national rail, the London underground etc.

Though thwarted from gaining any new seats by the FPTP voting system UKIP had nearly 4 million votes and thus exerts powerful pressure on the Tories to be even harsher in their anti-immigrant policies and strengthens the get out of Europe at any cost forces in the Tories ranks.

In short – despite the anti-austerity vote for the SNP and the Greens - the 2015 election shows a powerful move to the right in British politics. We can expect a first 100 days of reactionary legislation aimed at further undermining the welfare state, including the NHS, the public education system, the welfare system, abolishing fundamental democratic rights, fostering racism and Europhobia and increasing the New Cold War propaganda that has erupted over the past year or so.

Social Housing will be sold off at a faster rate, the Bedroom Tax will claim more lives amongst the poor, the old and disabled, the media especially the BBC will come under attack to further stifle any oppositional views. Measured by this the votes for left candidates from Left Unity and TUSC are of little consolation – indeed they are insignificant. However the results of our campaigning in terms of new members won and our greater integration into the spectrum of resistance movements does count and fully justifies standing.

The election of a right wing government and the growth of right wing populism must not be a cause for useless hand wringing. Indeed it must be a spur to resistance – a wake-up call.

The threat from a resurgent right - including the Blairite offensive to “take back” the Labour Party for the policies of pandering to the aspirational middle classes and the rich, well epitomized by the corrupt Blair himself and Mandelson, are yet more reasons, if more were needed, justifying for LU’s project of building a new party of the left in Britain around its declared aims. We will do so however only if Left Unity immediately puts itself in the forefront of the resistance that the Tory victory and the threat of UKIP has already set in motion. In London alone we have seen thousands at the Reclaim Brixton rally and demonstration, at the Whitehall protests and the meeting on Thursday called by Brick Lane Debates forum. All these show that young people, community activists, trade union members, are not only alarmed at the Tory victory but also determined to fight back.

It is important to mobilise for every significant call for resistance and protest because they are vital for launching a renewed powerful movement of resistance as soon as possible. We need to strike while indignation and alarm are motivating people to become active. Left Unity should do all in its power to initiate or support such actions around the country, call mobilizing meetings for June 20 to book coaches, leaflet workplaces, commit the unions to supporting it nationally and locally etc.

But it is important that we examine some of the problems of the last 5 years. The coalition government faced some opposition, but the anti cuts movement dwindled after a couple of years, divided and scattered with no clear strategy beyond demonstrations. The trade union movements resistance peaked with the public sector pensions mass strike and then retreated at a pace when Unison pulled out. After that set back the Bedroom tax and benefits cap were rolled through at speed – the Tories knowing that the opposition was too weak to stop them.

In particular the failure to mobilise against Lansley’s NHS “reforms” when they were going through parliament was a real scandal. UKIP membership and supported accelerated after 2013 as the left failed to provide an alternative.

Finally, the government have proven to be experts and divide and rule. Turning public and private sector workers against each other, employed against unemployed, racism, etc. Broad propaganda and arguments against these tactics are essential if we are to have any hope of winning.

#### Key battles and next steps

Defending and extending trade union rights - a strategic goal otherwise our resistance will be even weaker under the Tories. Linked to this is the general attack on our rights which is the first thing the new government has taken a lead on.

Welfare/benefits - we need to be creative, claimants unions, pamphlets with key arguments, pressure on the PCS to refuse to implement sanctions. Organising the unorganised will be very important if we want to fight back and win NHS - ongoing privatisation, we need to work more closely with KONHP and health workers in Unison to make something happen around this.

United campaigns with other socialists, the Greens and Labour Left are very important now. We want to build Left Unity but we have to be strong advocates of a united fight back. Any new united organisations of resistance that emerge must be democratic with no privileges for "big names" to set the agenda.

Economy slow down - we will need to keep an eye on this and make sure that we have good regular coverage of economic issues on our website. Economic slow down globally, deflation and the housing bubble could all come together into something potentially explosive.

Proportional Representation - we should be involved in this but it isn't a priority as much as building and strengthening the resistance to the Tory cuts.

EU referendum - a referendum on the EU could happen as soon as 2016 - whatever the position on in or out it will see a huge wave of xenophobia and racism.

#### **Motion introduced by Oliver N on building solidarity with unions and communities. Following discussion, the following action points were agreed and Oliver agreed to organize a team of people to arrange the summer event:**

- We should urge branches and regions to relate to these developments – we have many comrades involved in community struggles, either directly or through their unions or Trades Councils or Unite Community. It would be useful to identify some of this excellent work, whether or not it is carried out under the banner of Left Unity. We should therefore ask regionally elected NC members to survey and discuss with the branches and activists in their own area and produce short reports for a future NC discussion.
- We should organise a day event in the late summer for Left Unity members and sympathisers to exchange experiences and discuss promoting our work around community unionism. This to be in London initially, though if useful we can repeat it in the North West or wherever regions and branches think it would be useful.

#### Item Four: Follow Up From NC Decisions

- **Len Arthur reported that the Manifesto in Wales will be produced in both Welsh and English**
- **Pete Green reported that he has been unable to find someone to convene the Constitution Commission so this will be referred back to NC**
- **NC Meeting 13th – 14th June 2015**

*Volunteer Chairs: Terry Conway, Felicity Dowling, Simon Hardy, Eve Turner, Liz Davies and Matthew Caygill*

- Location will be in London with people local to London helping to find accommodation for members
- The Saturday will be an open day for EC/ NC/ and other interested participants to discuss the General Election, motions and the way forward for the party

- The Sunday will see the NC meet and discuss/vote on issues taking into account the wider discussions from the Saturday
- The economics day school scheduled for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July has been rescheduled to early October 2015

Item Five: Items Left Over From NC Agenda

**\* Finance**

**Andrew B gave a finance report as follows:**

- Raised £16 000 for the General Election campaign
  - Spending was several thousand more
  - All candidates received equal amounts of funding
  - Noted that the money would not have been available if the candidates were not standing so it was not a waste of saved money
- Agreed to expenditure for the 20<sup>th</sup> June 2015
  - Placards, broadsheets etc.
- Thanks and appreciations should be sent to Rob M
- Agreed that Alice K replace Rob M on the finance committee

**\* Branch Development Report**

**Simon H led a discussion on the branch development report. Simon and Sam were thanked for their work on this.**

**\* Correspondence: Kate H reported items:**

- Ken L has requested that we promote the principal speakers on the website for media contact purposes – agreed.
- TUSC proposal reported: agreed that we reiterate our conference policy that we will not join TUSC and refer a decision to the NC as to whether to discuss further electoral cooperation with TUSC.

- **Left Unity Scotland Meeting – 30<sup>th</sup> May 2015 – Simon H agreed to attend**

