

Left Unity Executive Committee Minutes
11 October 2014, Conway Hall, London
12 noon to 5pm

Attendance: Felicity D, Pete G, Bianca T, Kate H, Chris H, Tom W, Terry C, Oliver N, Andrew B (officers); Kerry A, Toby A, Gioia C, Merry C, Jon D, Sharon McC, Joana R (Directly elected); Mike S (East Mids); Fred L (London), Andy H (Wales), Ruth S (Women's Caucus); Richard F (LGBTQ Caucus); Nathan R (Youth Caucus)

Observers: Dave S (Lambeth), Mark L (Swansea)

Apologies: Salman S, Tim N, Karen M, Hazel D, Ben L, Lynn G, Darren McC, Susan P

Chairs: Felicity D and Andrew B

Minutes: Oliver N

1. Items from the September NC not covered at that meeting:

a) Membership, Branches and Communication Report

Written reports on membership from Barbara and on Branches, Regions and Communication from Terry had been distributed. It was noted that membership had stopped rising but was stable at just below 2000. Our infrastructure was still weak and heavily reliant on volunteers. There was a political and organisational discussion on how to grow the organisation. Branch and regional organisation were identified as key areas that need to be strengthened.

- **Agreed** that Kate would contact the elected Regional reps about regional development. The branch organising day will be re-scheduled. Paper membership forms will shortly be available and put online. The move to direct debits from standing orders is ongoing. Barbara and Terry were thanked for their work.

b) Paper from Disputes Committee

A paper had been distributed outlining concerns from the Disputes Committee on the Separation of Disputes and Executive Processes in the party.

The EC discussed this at length, the problem being recognised that disputes and organisational and political issues can be entangled.

- **Agreed** to ask Kate, as the Secretary, to thank the Disputes Committee very much for their difficult work and to explain that the EC's position remains the same – that the political leadership should deal with matters of party structure and organisation.

c) Correspondence

Invitation to European conference on Youth and Education

LU had been invited to attend a conference in Copenhagen, organised by the Socialist Youth Front and the Red-Green Alliance in Denmark.

- **Agreed** to send two people if possible, with a maximum budget of £500 .
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Letter from TUSC

- **Noted** that NC had already agreed to send a group to meet TUSC and that we are waiting for TUSC to come back to us with dates.

2. Follow Up from Decisions of the September National Council

a) UK Constitution Commission: Steve Freeman is following up on this work.

b) Radical Independence Campaign: Conference in Glasgow.

- **Agreed** to send the following as observers: Gioia C, Steve F, Sharon McC and Fred L (Fred being self-paying)

c) Election Work: It was noted that TUSC, Respect, Greens and Class War have responded to invitations for discussion. An informal discussion has taken place between Green party leader and Kate H, Class War has declined discussion and meetings are being arranged with TUSC and Respect.

There was a discussion and mixed views as to whether we should challenge UKIP in the forthcoming Rochester and Strood by-election.

- **Agreed** to empower the Elections Sub-Committee to take decisions on where to stand in discussions with local branches, in this case Medway. It was also **agreed** to ask the Elections Sub-Committee to sort out talks with other parties.

d) Motion 1 from Northampton Branch: It was agreed that people with no money (usually young or homeless) could if necessary have their membership paid by their local branch or by a national fund set up for that purpose.

Motion 2 from Northampton Branch: **Noted** that branch starter/campaign kits would be produced and distributed by new branch development staff member when in place.

e) Women's Caucus Motion on voluntary monitoring information. It was **agreed** that Terry would progress the revision of the form, having liaised with the women's and LGBTQ caucuses and trade union officers.

f) Soutwark Motion on Saving the NHS:

- **Agreed** that Andy H and Mark B would progress this in liaison with John L.

g) Manchester and Eastern Region motions on TTIP would be progressed.

- **Agreed** that we did not wish to duplicate the existing campaigns. It was **agreed** that Pete G would regularly update the website on TTIP. It was **agreed** to encourage branches to hold public meetings on TTIP. **Agreed** Kate H to contact GUE/NGL.

h) The February or March Weekend Political Event: Andrew B reported that work had started on this and several people had volunteered to assist, including himself, Pete G, Phil H, Tom W and Terry C. The weekend of March 22nd and 23rd was a possibility. It was proposed to hold the event in London, to maximise support. **Carried:** 13 For, 6 Against, 1 Abstention. Felicity pointed out that the **Left Unity Housing Conference** was on 7th March in Liverpool.

i) Election Fund Raising Committee: this is a priority.

- **Agreed** to write to NC members asking for volunteers to join the committee.

j) Principal Speaker

Bianca said that having been subject to criticism from some members, she was resigning as a principal speaker in order to submit herself to democratic re-election.

3. National Conference Update

Kate H reported that the Conference will take place in the London Irish Centre which is accessible. Online registration has opened. The Standing Orders Committee is pressing ahead with its work and documents will shortly be online.

- **Agreed** to extend the membership deadline by one week to 22nd October in order to allow those who joined from the Podemos tour a chance to take part.
- **Agreed** to directly appeal to London members for accommodation offers.
- **Agreed** Kerry A and Terry C to join the Conference Arrangements Committee together with Kate H, Kathy L and Gioia C.
- **Agreed** to organise a crèche either in the venue or extremely close by.
- **Agreed** that Kate would request that the SOC allow a slot at the beginning and end of the Conference to highlight the success of Left Unity to date and moving forward. (Beginning slot doubling with report of work).
- **Agreed** to ask SOC if a slot could be included for a branch development workshop.
- **Agreed** to ensure there were social possibilities available, especially on Saturday evening.
- **Agreed** to ask for screen projection of the Agenda.
- **Agreed** to prepare conference guidelines and standing orders.
- **Agreed** that CAC should secure experienced chairs in advance.

4. Campaigning

a) White Balloon Campaign

Felicity reported on the white ribbon campaign against child abuse and the covering up for child abuse.

- **Agreed** to support actions called by the campaign and also to take white balloons to other protest events to make the campaign better known.

b) Left Unity Podemos Tour

Andrew reported that six meetings had now been set up and the London meeting had been massively supported so that an overflow venue had to be booked.

- **Agreed** to investigate sign language interpreters.
- **Agreed** that Fred would make the financial appeal.

c) TUC National Demonstration 18th October

- **Agreed** we should fully support picket lines in the run up to the demonstration. Tom was producing leaflets that could be used on the 18th and at Podemos meetings

5. AOB: Unofficial facebook page: Nathan R outlined concerns from Youth Caucus about the page. Following discussion:

- **Agreed** that Kate H would write to Peter M requesting that the page be shut down.

6. Dates of next meetings

National Council:

December 13th in London

March 14th

Executive Committee:

January 17th in Birmingham

February 14th