

## **Minutes of Left Unity National Council Meeting**

**Saturday 20 September 2014**

**12-5pm**

**Quaker Meeting House, 40 Bull Street, Birmingham B4 6AF**

**Attendance: Officers:** Pete G, Salman S, Bianca T, Kate H, Tom W, Terry C, Oliver N, Andrew B; **Directly Elected:** Kerry A, Toby A, Matthew C, Gioia C, Merry C, Jon D, Stephen H, Guy H, Yassamine M, Sharon McC, Pete McL, Joana R, Barbara S, Pip T; **Eastern:** Karen M; **East Midlands:** Mike S, Liz S; **London:** Simon H, Fred L, Terry S, Doug T, Roisin B, Eve T; **North West:** Hazel D, Bev K; **Scotland:** Matthew J; **South West:** Katie B; South East: Anna B, Colin P; **West Midlands:** Darren McC; **Women's Caucus:** Susan P; **Disabled Members' Caucus:** Roland W; **LGBTQ Caucus:** Philip I

**Apologies:** Felicity D, Chris H, Liz D, Kathy L, Mark F, Andy H, Lynn G, Geoff H, Kath O

**Observers:** Mary-Ann B, Ally Mc G, Steve F, Mark F.

**Chairs:** Jon D and Merry C

**Minutes:** Karen M

### **To be read in conjunction with September NC papers**

#### **1. Minutes of the June NC and matters arising:**

**a)** Liz S asked if specific NC standing orders had been prepared. Kate H explained that Liz D had not been able to work on these yet. Agreed to use model SOs from constitution.

**b)** Stephen H pointed out omission of anti-fracking proposals and NC agreed to include.

**c)** Guy H pointed out incorrect minuting on social media job and NC agreed to correct.

**d)** A request was made that pre-NC timetable be modified to allow branch consultation. Referred to EC.

**e)** The minutes as amended were agreed as a correct record.

#### **2. Decisions from EC meetings for approval by NC**

July decisions were approved by the NC following discussion:

a) That Disputes Committee (DC) standing orders should be on agenda for November Conference

b) That the NC should give consideration to strengthening party policy on member allocation to branches (following a DC request)

c) That the NC should consider implications where party members refuse individually or collectively to comply with DC and party processes (following a DC request)

August decisions were deferred to the agenda item on Conference preparation.

#### **3. Political context discussion and campaigning priorities**

Andrew B introduced the discussion which included the international situation, the referendum outcome and implications, TUC conference and general election campaign. Discussion included the living wage/living standards issue plus positive feedback about LU's presence on the 999 NHS march.

**An emergency motion was introduced** by Gioia C on the Scottish referendum outcome. **An amended version was passed as follows:**

“This meeting recognises the historic significance of the Scottish referendum for the democratic political future of the UK. We resolve to encourage and promote a party wide discussion on the future of democracy throughout the UK.”

**It was agreed** to establish a commission on the UK constitution and Steve F was elected as convenor.

**It was agreed** to send three observers to the RIC conference in Scotland.

#### **4. Election sub-committee report and related motions**

Tom W presented the elections sub-committee report (see NC papers for text). Kate H pointed out the omission of the words ‘including the Green Party’ in section b) line 3.

Following discussion the paper was endorsed.

**Motions from Rugby and Coventry LU branches** (largely the same text - see NC papers) were discussed. These motions fell on voting with 8 for, 24 against and 7 abstentions.

#### **5. Branch motions to NC**

**Motions from Manchester LU and Eastern Region** on TTIP were composited and passed unanimously.

Left Unity restates its outright opposition to TTIP as it presents an immediate and long term threat to both public services and to the limited democracy that the countries of the EU currently have.

At our Policy Conference on 29 March 2014, Left Unity committed itself to a high-profile campaign against TTIP as soon as possible.

National Council resolves that the high-profile campaign which Left Unity could take a lead in promoting would include the demands that:

1. if the negotiations on TTIP proceed as far as producing a proposed treaty for ratification, the terms of that proposed treaty shall be fully disclosed publicly.
2. the UK will insist that ratification of the treaty by the EU shall be dependent upon individual decisions to ratify taken in each member state.
3. the UK’s decision upon whether or not to ratify TTIP shall be made by a referendum, after allowing time for the full terms of the treaty to be scrutinised by the general public and organisations in society.

National council further resolves to urge our sister parties across Europe in the GUE/NGL (as well as left-wing organisations in countries in the EU or USA where we do not have a sister party) to exert pressure on their governments with similar high-profile campaigns.

Such an approach would raise the central democratic issue of popular sovereignty and would be consistent too with the Policy Conference resolution on our European work.

TTIP is a complex treaty and is a deliberate assault on the part of transnational corporations, the modern robber barons, against the working class internationally. If this agreement between the European Union and the United States of America is ratified, the right of populations to limit the rapacity of these apex predators of capital will achieve the following goals and ends:

1. It bypasses national court systems, establishing special tribunals that only corporations can access.
2. It allows corporations to overturn democratically agreed rules and laws.
3. It makes democracy more remote from the people.

4. It could be a threat to our environment, public health laws, food standards rules, restrictions on hazardous chemicals and many other policy areas.

TTIP is meant by its authors to be a death blow to human rights and the sovereign triumph of the rights of capital. As a party of the Left it is incumbent on LU and her members to collectively and individually oppose the ratification of this appalling treaty.

#### **Motions from Northampton LU:**

**Motion 1** on homeless young people and membership fees: referred to EC.

The Northampton Branch of Left Unity proposes that all young people under the age of 18 years and those who find themselves as homeless should be exempt from the membership fee. This should be done as young people and homeless people are less likely to have a disposable income; however this motion should not prevent those who wish to contribute to the membership fee from being able to do so.

**Motion 2** on branch starter/campaign kits: passed.

The Northampton Branch of Left Unity recognises the importance of strong branches to grow the party and understands that initially branches may have limited resources. It therefore proposes that when branches are operational as defined within the constitution. That the branch be provided with a start-up/campaign kit, to include banner, fliers, badges etc.

**Motion 3** on party aims and principles: withdrawn.

**Motion from the LU Women's Caucus** on collection of voluntary monitoring information: passed with the form agreed in principle but to be modified before use.

The LU Women's Caucus meeting asks the NC to consider the collection of monitoring information from members on the following basis

- It should be voluntary and not a condition of membership or support
- Explained that the reason is to promote equality & diversity more effectively, identify where LU is lacking so we can take steps to overcome barriers to involvement and invite involvement in self-organised groups
- In line with good practice monitoring information to be kept anonymous, confidential, separate from membership/personal details and according to data protection
- A separate consent form where permission can be given if wished to have further details of self-organised groups

**Motion from Lambeth LU** on holding a delegate manifesto conference: defeated with 9 votes for, 24 against, 8 abstentions. The manifesto sub-committee will report to the December NC.

#### **Motion from Southwark LU: Saving the NHS**

The date in 'resolves point 1' was removed and 'resolves point 2' was amended to 2015. The motion preamble was amended to make it clear that it was not Left Unity that should be taking the lead on these initiatives

but that Left Unity would be working with NHS campaigns to further the aims of the motion. Passed unanimously as amended:

The fight to Save the NHS is one of the most important campaigns against austerity. It has been hampered by inaction from the unions, and fragmented and localised campaigns. There is an urgent need to unite the localised campaigns, and those union branches willing to fight into a national save the NHS campaign. Left Unity will work with others to support campaigning unity which could include discussion of the following proposals:

A conference of all NHS campaigns to agree a series of days of action, one a month until the General Election to ensure the NHS is in the media and the government's destructive policy towards the NHS is at the front of voters minds; organising a national Save the NHS demonstration to highlight what the government has done; organising a national coalition of NHS campaigns to give national focus and leadership to the campaign to save the NHS; producing materials to inform staff on how to fight the cuts in the NHS.

**To this end, Left Unity resolves to:**

1. Approach all local and national NHS campaigns about holding a national Save the NHS conference. This includes Keep Our NHS Public, National Health Action Party and all other local and national campaigning groups.
2. Campaign for such a conference to call a Save the NHS demonstration in 2015.
3. Organise a meeting of the Left Unity Health caucus to discuss support for this endeavour.

**Motion from Lambeth LU** on *Independent* newspaper allegations: withdrawn following discussion.

**6. LU Wales constitution: approved unanimously.**

**7. Conference preparation report**

KH reported on conference preparation so far, including discussion of the August EC points for follow up. It was noted that the SoC has agreed the pre-conference timetable so far and it has been circulated to branches. Following discussion it was noted that the November conference is a National Conference in line with constitutional requirements and the NC has chosen an agenda which primarily but not exclusively follows up on outstanding policy areas.

The following points were agreed:

- a) To extend the conference to a two day event on 15/16 November.
- b) To continue with London as the venue.
- c) To take constitutional amendments (submission by amendments date in the pre-conference timetable).
- d) That the subsequent National Conference will be in autumn 2015, preferably in the main party conference season (Sept/Oct).
- e) That the membership cut off point for conference participation is 15<sup>th</sup> October 2014.

**It was also Agreed:** that Left Unity should organise a weekend political event in February/March open to non-members and other organisations.

#### **8. Finance Report**

Andrew B gave the finance report and presented the budget: endorsed unanimously.

An election fund-raising committee was proposed with a target to raise £60,000: agreed.

**9. All other agenda items to be referred to the EC owing to time constraints.**