

EC minutes - 08 August 2015

Present: Doug, Andrew (Treasurer), Sharon, Barbara, Richard, Tom (Media officer), Siobhan (Scotland), Ian L (Youth), Kate (National Secretary), Dave, Kathy, Bianca, Stephen, Brigitte, Salman (Spokesperson), Matthew, Kath, Simon Hardy (Membership and Communications)

Apologies: Micheline, Liz, Len, Olly, Eve, Terry, Pete, Guy.

1. Minutes and Matters Arising

- Update on the Economics day school on 10/10 – FB event is set up and organisers are contacting speakers. **ACTION:** Kate to contact the organisers for more details so that we can promote the event more.
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- Kate and Terry met with Clive – was a friendly exchange. The joint name is still registered if there are any plans for it to be used again.
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- A room has been booked for the Branch Organisers event and the Trade Union Organisers event on 24 October at the Wesley. **ACTION:** Bianca and Simon to send out a timetable
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- The appeal for people to move over to the DD system has only had about 10 people respond. **ACTION:** We still have to send another email out to members (Tom to do) to move the rest over.
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- Simon is going to the 29 August Scottish Left Project conference and will be Skyping in to the Scottish Committee meeting on 23 August
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- Disputes committee has met on 31 July, agreed a quorum of 3 for meetings and looked over the current cases. Disputes can be referred from Regional Committees, the EC if not functioning RC exists and the NC.
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- Joint event with BLD does not have a date yet, there might be a smaller event in the autumn.
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- Conference venue: Kate and CAC is looking into a venue, could be the Royal National Hotel. EC suggests attendance of £20 (solidarity) / £10 (waged) /£5 (solidarity). London Regional Committee will take charge of organising the accommodation for the event.
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- Next EC (October 3rd) is from 1-5 in the Quaker Friends House in Mount Street
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- **ACTION:** Guy is producing a draft paper on changing the political narrative
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- Fringe meeting in Manchester – no progress yet made. **ACTION:** Kate to email Terry about details.
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- Request for a leaflet focussing on women and austerity. **ACTION:** Terry and Brigitte on updating the previous leaflet.
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- Kate got a message from the ELP. The delegation has written up their report and will be making a recommendation to the executive at the end of September.
- Ian reported on the Youth and Students section. They have a functioning executive and are building a database of young members of LU. There is a day school on 29 August at

Birkbeck called Red Futures. Speakers include Luke Cooper, Richard Seymour, Aaron Bastani, Yassamine Mather and others.

- **ACTION:** Simon to put in the email to branches asking for details of all members under 30 to be passed onto LU Youth and Students. Branch organisers need to send regular updates to the caucuses and sections if people are interested.
- **ACTION:** Y&S to bring a proposal to the next leadership meeting about student work.

2. Corbyn Campaign

Andrew introduced on the developments in the Corbyn campaign and a resolution he drafted on Left Unity in relation to the new movement around his leadership campaign.

Proposal for an online journal. **ACTION:** Kate, Andrew, Tom, Simon to get it organised
Proposal for Friends of Left Unity and a counter proposal to remove that phrase and keep on engaging with ex members. **ACTION:** Agreed to change supporter email out to Friends of Left Unity email out.

Proposal to have a leaflet. **ACTION:** Andrew to draft and bring to the weekly meeting.

Proposal for Kate to email to email all NC members and ex election candidates to withdraw their signing up **ACTION:** Any NC members who have signed up as supporters of the Labour party should withdraw.

Proposal for EC to help branches organise meetings in the Autumn around the new developments.
ACTION: weekly group

3. Internal communications resolution

Simon Hardy introduced the motion on online communications.

Proposal: Official online forum with a published moderation policy. Carried

Proposal: Emails out to members to have a section on new articles. Carried

Proposal: Relevant issue based articles to have comments open on them with stringent pre-moderation.

Proposal: A members only area (Tom and Simon to contact web people)

4. Leeds branch

Kate introduced on the proposed resolution document for the Leeds branches.

Leeds NE branch thanked Kate and Simon for coming to Leeds to try and resolve the issues.

Proposal: The EC accepts the name Leeds Central and West. Kate and Simon to facilitate decision on boundaries. Leeds City Committee to organise on branch delegate basis.

Motion from Leeds North East branch on situation in Leeds was withdrawn.

Motion on the WW/CPGB article concerning the article about Matthew Caygill. After a discussion the EC proposed an alternative motion which was passed:

“Left Unity rejects and condemns the personalised and witch-hunting attack on valued NC member Matthew Caygill contained in the article. The article misrepresents him and his politics. The whole tenor of the article is an attempt at bullying.

Left Unity condemns the destructive nature of Weekly Worker's coverage of the situation in Leeds.

Left Unity recognises that such personalised attacks on comrades within Left Unity have no place within the workers movement.”

5. Housing conference

Doug introduced. The housing conference, called by groups like Unite Community, Generation Rent, People's Assembly and Radical Housing Network

Proposal to support the conference. Carried

6. Finance

Andrew introduced on the finances.

Proposal for merchandise on the website. Carried **ACTION:** Richard, Tom and Simon to investigate.

7. Campaign document

Meeting was running out of time so Kate proposed an online discussion about the discussion. Carried

Next meeting

Next EC is October 3rd from 1-5 in the Quaker Friends House in Mount Street

Next NC is September 5th in Birmingham.

Appendix A – Jeremy Corbyn campaign

The campaign to elect Jeremy Corbyn as the leader of the Labour Party has drawn tens of thousands of people into political activity.

Throughout Europe we have seen the emergence of new parties and movements in response to the capitulation of social democracy to the neoliberal austerity offensive. It is in this context that the candidacy of Jeremy Corbyn for the Labour leadership must be seen.

Britain has seemed immune to these wider European political developments and it was in this context that Left Unity was founded – to attempt to address this absence. A deflected radicalisation found some focus in the pre-election surge in Green Party and in the electoral success of the Scottish National Party.

From the moment that Jeremy announced his intention to stand he was met with an incredible enthusiasm not just by members of the Labour Party itself but throughout the whole left and beyond.

His campaign has reached thousands of young people new to politics. Much of the trade union movement is backing him and his campaign expresses the hopes of millions of people suffering because of the policies of this government.

The alternative policies that Corbyn represents – anti-austerity, anti-war, defending the welfare state, repealing the anti-trade union laws and calling for nationalisation of essential services are policies that Left Unity fights for too. These are policies that we all share. He is bringing those policies not only to the Labour membership, but widely across British society.

His campaign offers renewal for the left in Britain. We are seeing the emergence of a real mass movement – many towns and cities are seeing their largest political meetings for a generation.

A rejection of social democracy's neoliberal turn so prominently within a social democratic party is an important development and the eyes of the left in Europe will be upon this leadership contest.

When Left Unity was founded we understood clearly that to become a serious political force we would need to forge strategic alliances throughout the left.

We need to support this process – to raise the level of political debate, to assist in shifting the balance of the political narrative, and supporting the strengthening of the socialist voice and values within the Labour Party.

Left Unity recognises the enormous opportunity for the left, the movements and more importantly, the working class as a whole that the Corbyn campaign represents.

The right in the Labour Party will use any means necessary to halt this new movement. Already there are moves for the election campaign to be stopped because of bogus claims of far left infiltration and many Labour Party grandees have been wheeled out to warn against a Corbyn victory.

If Jeremy wins the leadership despite the endless propaganda against him in the wider media and the political elite we will still only be at the beginning of the struggle to implement the changes in society that we all want to see.

His victory would unleash a wave of enthusiasm in wider society but there would be a virtual state of civil war inside the Labour Party with MPs attempting to remove him at the first opportunity. The majority of the parliamentary party is opposed to the politics of the Corbyn campaign and that

presents a serious long-term obstacle for the Labour left.

Left Unity understands that some of its members will view joining the Labour Party as the avenue for supporting this new movement. Some have already left in order to campaign and vote for Jeremy. We wish them well and recognise that in ending their membership they are not renouncing the shared politics which drew them towards our party in the first place.

However we believe that this new movement around the leadership campaign in the Labour Party represents a new political moment which goes well beyond the structure of the Labour Party itself. The success of Jeremy's campaign has been because it is rooted in the social movements and for it to succeed more fully it will need to sustain and draw sustenance from those movements.

Left Unity is an activist campaigning party and will remain so. Our founding aim to build a broad party of the left remains our key strategic task, as we work alongside those in the Labour Party and other organisations where we share common policy aspirations.

There is a pressing need for a wide ranging discussion on the left about how those who share a political perspective both inside and outside the Labour Party can work to ensure the success of those common goals.

We shall establish an on-line journal to continue a debate on the left on these central questions. We will be supporting all our branches and regions in initiating a public discussion on how best to support and develop this new movement

We will introduce a 'friends of Left Unity' category whereby those who have chosen not to remain members can continue to receive our newsletter and participate in joint discussion and common action on issues that unite us.

Appendix B - Internal communications

In the run up to our national conference it is imperative that members have a number of avenues of communication open to them to discuss and debate our resolutions and issues at the conference.

Currently the official means of communication between members is too limited and should be expanded.

There is a debates and discussion section on the website but its articles are not circulated enough among the membership. Many members do not know about the articles on the site.

The unofficial FB pages, whilst offering some scope for discussion among members, is also full of ex members and people who don't like LU, and has witnessed some ridiculous debates that were harmful to LUs reputation. It would be better to use social media in a constructive way to improve our internal life.

To this end we resolve the following action points:

- Official Facebook online forum with a published moderation policy. Simon to set up
- Emails out to members to have a section on new articles. Tom and Simon to implement
- Relevant issue based articles to have comments open on them with stringent pre-moderation. Tom to change settings on future articles
- A members only area for the website

Appendix C – motions on Leeds situation

The Leeds aggregate - called to deal with the ongoing issue of a divided branch and breakdown in working relationships - was a largely positive meeting. Whilst it is clear that there is still a lot of mistrust and a certain "toxic" feeling among some Left Unity members in the city - many people talked about trying to move forward and overcome the problems. A number of people have joined the party since the branch split and there is a feeling that the current situation cannot remain as it is.

The approach of the EC delegates was simple. We want to de-escalate the problems and move towards a situation where a working relationship is re-established. In the context of a Tory government and the destruction of the welfare state it is unacceptable for branches to be diverted from active political campaigning into internal argument. Whatever arrangements are necessary to ensure that essential political work is continued and stepped up, including a geographical split either as a temporary or permanent feature, will be decided in a practical manner to make sure that Left Unity can be built by all members in a way that takes the party forward.

After having heard the contributions, the feeling of the delegates from the EC was that the Leeds branch motion calling for a single branch was not suitable since there was not enough good will to work together that closely yet.

Likewise we felt that the three motions from the Leeds North East branch were not conducive to rebuilding a working relationship so thought it would not be appropriate for the meeting to vote on them.

The key proposals that came out of the discussion which we felt were very useful for an ongoing solution to take things forward were:

1. Maintain the distinct branches but ensure their geographical viability. Both branches to discuss and come up with viable proposals, in conjunction with the EC delegates as required. The currently-named "Leeds branch" will rename itself to reflect its geographical area of work. Leeds comrades to come up with a proposal.
2. A regularly meeting City Committee of reps from each branch to discuss joint work. This should ensure no clashes of meetings and promote better coordination between members.
3. A regular joint activity (stall, meeting, demo, etc) at least once a month.
4. A regular members newsletter, to be edited by the City Committee which highlights the positive work of the branches.

The branches will organise a City Committee meeting in early September to discuss, among other things, Left Unity work at the university.

The two branches in Leeds should submit their proposal for the geographical division of the city to the National Secretary for the EC meeting on 8 August. If this isn't possible, an alternative date should be advised.

1. Motion on Weeekly Worker article on Leeds situation in WW 1068

Emergency Motion from Leeds North and East

1. Weekly Worker 1068 (July 23rd 2015), the weekly organ of the Communist Party of Great Britain (Provisional Central Committee), carried an article by Tina Becker and Michael Copestake of the CPGB about the July 18th Regional Council and Leeds Aggregate entitled 'Sectarian anti-sectarianism' accompanied by a photograph of Senator Joe McCarthy.
2. Left Unity rejects and condemns the personalised and witch-hunting attack on Matthew Caygill contained in the article. The article misrepresents him and his politics. The whole tenor of the article is an attempt at bullying.
3. Left Unity deplores the inaccurate nature of this article. The inaccuracies include:
 - * 'comrade Caygill's' membership of the Podemos Tendency,
 - * the reasons for creating Leeds North and East,
 - * the claim that 'Caygill and co' rejected a mediation report because it would rename 'Leeds' as 'Leeds Central' (the very suggestion of Caygill),
 - * the claim that the motions from Leeds North and East are the work of a 'few right-wingers' instead of the unanimous vote of a properly constituted branch meeting,
 - * the dishonest interpretation of our objection to the 'many-hats' problem,
 - * the dishonesty of the accusation that there was any attempt to expel Workers Power.
4. Left Unity condemns the destructive nature of Weekly Worker's coverage of the situation in Leeds.
5. Left Unity recognises that such personalised attacks on comrades within Left Unity have no place within the workers movement.
6. Left Unity calls for a retraction and an apology from Weekly Worker.

From Leeds North and East Branch

Individually signed by:

Fran Belbin (Sheffield & NC)
Matthew Caygill (Leeds N+E, NC and EC)
Rhea Ewen (Leeds N+E)
Angela Dwyer (Leeds N+E)
Garth Frankland (Leeds N+E)
Terry Gallogly (York)
Pete Green (Hackney and Principal Speaker)
Vin Hitchiner (Leeds N+E)
Nick Jones (Leeds N+E)
Kath Owen (Leeds N+E, NC and Regional EC)
Liz Owens (Leeds N+E)
Richard Owens (Leeds N+E)
Laila Packer (Leeds N+E)
Marc Renwick (Leeds N+E , NC)
John Ward (Leeds N+E)

Motion to Leeds Executive Council/Regional Council

Passed unanimously by Leeds North and East branch, July 13th 2015

1. There are two branches of Left unity in Leeds. One, 'North and East Leeds' was formed to escape from the paralysing toxicity in relations between members of Left Unity in Leeds in late 2013. The founders of our branch agreed that the essential roots of those toxic relations was in the activities of a small group of 'revolutionary socialists' and their allies. Since setting that branch up we have attempted, with some success, to build a branch in accordance with the stated principles and policies of Left Unity. In particular we have attempted to build outside the usual haunts of the Leeds Left, including standing a candidate in

local elections in Middleton Park, a suburb of Leeds with little Left tradition and an historic base for the Far Right. We have also tried to build in the areas of Chapeltown and Harehills in an attempt to redress the obvious ethnic identity imbalances of Left Unity.

2. The other branch, called 'Leeds Left Unity' is dominated by Workers Power and their supporters. In their own documents they are clear that Left Unity is a means to their factional ends, which includes building a 'Fifth International'. One of their documents says "Building a Fifth International therefore requires a relentless struggle against centrism". We aren't even centrists in their criteria. We ask why should we put up with being the subject of a 'relentless struggle'? In our view they are using Left Unity to build Workers Power and their hopes of a mass revolutionary Fifth International. Their approach and political method has resulted in a growing distrust of their role inside Left Unity.
3. It is no longer supportable to have two branches in Leeds, one called 'North and East' but loyal to Left Unity, and another called 'Leeds' which is being used in bad faith by a faction. There must be an immediate change in the name of that branch.
4. The activities of Workers Power put people off, people we would have like to join Left Unity. They certainly played a role in ensuring that there is no Wakefield branch of Left Unity. Because of this it is imperative that some sort of voluntary Code of Conduct to govern the activities of a 'Democratic Centralist' organisation inside Left Unity be created. In particular we want to ensure that no-one is put off or alienated because of their antics in pursuit of their goal of a revolutionary party. Such a code was outlined in the mediation document drafted by Kate Hudson and Felicity Dowling on Sept 28th 2014. The relevant sections of that document include:

"We outlined the context in which we advanced our proposals for the branches namely that the Left Unity constitution specifies a one member one vote basis for participation in the party, not a coalition of different parties and groups. We noted that the constitution does not exclude party members from membership of other organisations.

But we also set out the importance of members who have dual membership with other parties and political organisations abiding by the spirit as well as the letter of the constitution. In other words, when engaging in Left Unity branch activity, members must not promote the policies of any other political party or organisation or seek to represent their policies as the policies of Left Unity, nor must they use Left Unity meetings or stalls as vehicles for the promotion of the politics or materials of other political parties or organisations.

1. However experience since September 2014 has convinced us that this does not go far enough. We want additional wording to govern the use made of social media and deal with other attempts to circumvent the spirit of this code, in particular to deal with 'different hats' question – it isn't good enough for a member to say 'At today's event I'm Workers Power, tomorrow I might be Left Unity'. We are not talking to goldfish, we want continuity.
5. Division of Leeds into geographical areas is not yet possible. The split is a result of the activities of Workers Power. We do not trust them to build a branch in accordance with the principles, policies and ethos of Left Unity.

3 Response from Rebecca Anderson (Leeds Central and West) re: new name

Hi Kate and Simon

Thanks for your report of the aggregate. The Leeds branch met last night and agreed this proposal for the geographical area our branch should cover and for a protocol of how members are allocated to branches as a transitional arrangement.

I've also attached the best postcode map that I can find and you'll see that our proposal is a wedge of the city that covers the centre and west.

Also, just to let you know that we recruited someone last night who had become disillusioned with the Green Party so he (Paul) should be popping up on the membership list soon.

Kind regards

Rebecca

- Leeds Central and West branch to be based in LS28, LS13, LS12, LS7, LS6, LS5, LS4, LS3, LS2 and LS1
- LS7 to be divided along Scothall Road
- If people join from the geographical areas of the above branches then they will be automatically allocated to that branch
- If people join from LS7 then LU membership will send their address to both branches so we can tell them which side of Scothall Road the address is on and therefore which branch they should be allocated to
- If people in the geographical area of one branch want join the other then they just need to email LU membership to let them know and they will be allocated to the other branch
- Anyone joining LU who doesn't live in the geographical area of either branch will have their contact details passed onto both branches. Until they inform LU membership that they have joined a branch they will be allocated to neither branch