

LEFT UNITY - NATIONAL COUNCIL

12 noon - 5 pm, 28th February 2015

NVCO, Society Building, 8 All Saints Street, London N1 9RL

1 Apologies

Felicity D, Colin P, Stephen H, Matthew C, Liz D, Pip T, Drew M,

2 Attendance

Chris H, Tom W, Terry C, Oliver N, Andrew B, Kate H (late as at 999 Convention), Pete G, Micheline M, Salman S, Eleanor F, Richard F, Doug T, Louise C, Matthew J (Scotland) , Anna B (SE), Susan P, Guy H, Yassamine M, Sharon McC, Barbara S, Liz S (East Mids), Simon H (London), Kathy L (London), Dave S (London), Toby A, Jon D, Mike S (East Mids)

3 Chair/minutes

The meeting was chaired jointly by Andrew Burgin and Chris Hurley and minuted by Richard Farnos

4 Manifesto

4.1 Tom W outlined the manifesto document that he presented to the meeting. It had been out to consultation with branches and he had received a number of proposals. A number where a positive reword or alterations in grammar were accepted. Four other proposals were rejected on the grounds that they were incompatible with policy passed at conference.

38 items identified as needing approval by the NC plus one additional item (4.15 VOTE 12a) that was identified from the floor.

[Please note where a motion was voted on unamended the name of the original branch/person is given]

4.2 It was proposed that if there was no one present prepared to support the amendment it should fall.

LOST (overwhelmingly)

It was agreed that each amendment to the manifesto should be dealt with in order, going straight the vote if no one sought to oppose, and that this process should be reviewed after 30 minutes

AGREED (without a vote)

[Please note that after 30 minutes the matter was reviewed and agreed to carry on in the same manner]

4.3 VOTE 1: Insert "Left Unity is the only broad socialist party to the left of Labour - the Greens do not say they are for an end to capitalism and for socialism." [Barnet]

LOST (for 8, against 10)

4.4 VOTE 2: Insert: "We are in favour of a radical system where democratic control extends across the economy. The natural wealth, and the means of production, distribution and exchange should be owned in common and democratically run by and for the people as a whole, rather than being owned and controlled by a small minority to enrich themselves.[Lambeth]

PASSED (unanimous)

4.5 VOTE 3: Insert: "Our policies are made by our members. They are emerging from democratic debate and will develop further over the next few years." [Wandsworth and Merton]

PASSED (unanimous)

4.6 VOTE 4: Delete "We will never vote for cuts or compromise our principles by participating in coalitions with capitalist parties." Insert "We will not vote for cuts or compromise our principles by participating in coalitions with capitalist parties." (ie change 'never' to 'not') [Mike Scott]

PASSED (for 13, against 5, abstentions 1)

4.7 VOTE 5:

Insert "We would legislate to create in every large company a supervisory board on which directors elected by the workforce and the community would have a majority. This board would appoint and control the managers and all company policy." [Ian Grigg-Spall]

PASSED (unanimous)

4.8 VOTE 6:

Insert: "Most government debt has been repaid many times over in interest payments from our taxes. We would over a period of 5 years cancel all such debt and stop interest payments except for those government bonds held by workers' pension funds". [Ian Grigg-Spall]

LOST (for 3, against 15, abstentions 2)

4.9 VOTE 7: [from 'Full employment' section]

After some discussion the following was agreed:

Workers must be allowed the democratic right to stand up for themselves. Left Unity would repeal all the anti-union laws, which restrict workers' rights to organise in defence of their wages and conditions. These laws, passed by the Tories between 1980 and 1994 and kept in place by Labour, give unelected judges sweeping powers to stop strikes and ban solidarity action.

We support calls for a charter of trade union rights, including an unrestricted right to strike.

PASSED (for 17 against 5, abstentions 1)

4.10 VOTE 8:

Insert "1 May, International Workers' Day, should be a public holiday." [Milo Madacky]

PASSED (unanimous)

4.11 VOTE 9: Insert "A weakness of the original NHS included poor democratic accountability and separate arrangements for GPs leaving them free to pursue private practice." [Lambeth].

PASSED (for 18, against 0, abstentions 3)

4.12 VOTE 10: Delete "Immigration controls divide and weaken the working class and are therefore against the interests of all workers." Insert "Immigration controls divide and weaken us and are therefore against the interests of us all." [Liz Silver]

FELL (for 11, against 11, abstentions 2)

4.13 VOTE 11: The current large-scale movement of people is caused by war, poverty and environmental disasters. [Barnet]

PASSED (for 18, against 1, abstentions 1)

4.14 VOTE 12: Existing 'illegal' immigrants should be given amnesty to stay, work and pay taxes so they can contribute to the economy. [Preston]

PASSED (for 16, against 1, abstentions 4)

4.15 VOTE 12a Delete "We oppose deportations and welcome asylum seekers and refugees fleeing war and poverty." Insert "We oppose deportations and welcome people fleeing war and poverty."

PASSED (for 15, against 0, abstentions 3)

4.16 VOTE 13:

Insert

Close down all immigration detention centres like Yarl's Wood and Harmondsworth. We are for the prosecution of all immigration or security officers involved in physical and sexual assaults on those detained or the murder of deportees. [Lambeth]

PASSED (for 17, against 0, abstention 2)

4.17 VOTE 14 Two counterposed resolutions from Lambeth and Preston and Stockport proposed the insertion in the paragraph around carers a commitment to a income of the 'living wage' and 'benefits of the same amount as an unemployed person including', respectively.

Upon reviewing the paragraph, the meeting felt it was unsatisfactory. It was agreed to delete whole paragraph starting "Many Carers..."

PASSED (for 19, against 1, abstentions 4)

4.18 VOTE 15: Delete 'Working class' [Liz Silver]

LOST (for 5, against 13, abstention 3)

4.19 VOTE 16: Insert: "As long as women are the ones primarily responsible for childcare and housework in the private home this acts to restrict their equal participation (and payment) at work and their access to jobs, social and political life. To combat this we demand free crèches and nursery schools, available for day workers and those who work shifts, maternity/paternity leave with no loss of pay or seniority, and affirmative action wherever women are under-represented in the workforce or in certain grades.

"Domestic violence and rape often go undetected and unpunished. Women, abused within the family home, often have nowhere to seek refuge for themselves or their children, with no independent source of income - a situation made worse by severe cuts to rape crisis centres and women's aid." [Lambeth]

PASSED (for 18, against 1, abstentions 2)

4.20 VOTE 17: Insert: Despite important changes brought about by women activists and male supporters within the labour movement we still need to combat sexism there, including within socialist organisations. Women must have the right to caucus (ie. meet on their own) to criticise sexist behaviour or discrimination, to educate and encourage one other to play a fuller part in the unions, parties etc, and to empower themselves to take on leadership roles at every level. [Lambeth]

PASSED (for 20, against 0, abstentions 1)

4.21 VOTE 18: We oppose cuts to HIV and sexual health services. [Southwark]

PASSED (overwhelmingly)

4.22 VOTE 19: Insert: "Young people

"Young people are discriminated against in our society. They are paid less and unemployment is double the rate of adults. Now further and higher education is saddling thousands with debt because of the tripling in university fees and scrapping of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

"There must be massive investment in education, but being young is about more than education. We support more free sports clubs and gyms, places where young people can make art, film or music, where youth can bring out their full creativity and have fun. It is important that they decide for themselves how their services are run.

"When some people talk about 'anti-social behaviour', our answer is to enrich the life of the young, not to demonise them in the media as chavs and hoodies or inflict police repression on them through stop and search laws and issuing Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBOs)."[Lambeth]

PASSED (for 20, against 0, abstentions 0)

4.23 VOTE 20: Insert: "We will ensure that pricing is fair and consistent, with energy profits being used to build renewable provision." [Preston]

LOST (overwhelmingly)

4.24 VOTE 21: Insert We would keep the ban on fox hunting and put an end to the badger culls. [Louise Wikstrom]

PASSED (unanimously)

4.25 VOTE 22: Insert: "We will provide free and healthy school meals for all pupils." [Preston]

PASSED (unanimously)

4.26 VOTE 23: Insert: "End the war on terror at home

"The war on terror is being used to create scapegoats and persecute communities and has become a 'catch-all' law with a chilling effect on political dissent. It is bound up with racism and imperialism.

"We are in favour of repealing all anti-terror legislation, ending all collaboration with foreign governments fighting the so-called war on terror and for the arrest of anyone involved in torture, rendition or other crimes against humanity. There must be no more detentions without trial or secret trials." [Lambeth]

PASSED (for 18, against 0, abstention 3)

4.27 VOTE 24: Delete: "End stop and search as a policy as it is disproportionately used as a racist measure against young black men." Insert "End stop and search as an indiscriminate policy used against persons who are not suspected of any criminal offence." [Stockport]

LOST (unanimous)

4.28 VOTE 25: Insert: Left Unity is opposed to any attempts at the suspension of habeas corpus and will defend the right of trial by jury of our peers in open courts. We also defend the presumption of innocence and are against the right to silence being used as indicative of guilt. [Lambeth]

PASSED (unanimously)

4.29 VOTE 26: Insert "We support the abolition of police and crime commissioners, to be replaced by directly elected police authorities." [Southwark]

PASSED (unanimously)

4.30 VOTE 27: Insert "Left Unity opposes state surveillance of internet traffic and demands the closure of GCHQ and the opening of its archives for public inspection." [Stockport, John Holmes]

PASSED (unanimously)

4.31 VOTE 28: Insert "Left Unity pledges also to fight for a better funded service from social workers, teachers, care workers, GPs, nurses and medical staff in detecting child abuse at an early stage." [Lambeth]

PASSED (unanimously)

4.32 VOTE 29: Insert: "What matters most immediately to working people is the restoration of the right of democratically elected representatives at every level from the local to the national to tax and spend: to tax the wealthy and spend on the poor and disadvantaged.

The royal family's enormous wealth, land and palaces should be put to social use. The same applies to the aristocracy and their mansions. The Church of England must be dis-established, its privileges ended and its wealth confiscated.

The first-past-the-post single constituency system must be replaced with proportional representation. We support the right of prisoners to vote. Local democracy should be restored, with powers returned to councils and democratic control of schools, hospitals and housing.

PASSED (for 13, against 6, abstentions 0)

4.33 VOTE 30: Delete any current sentence on proportional representation. Insert: "We would replace the current voting system of 'first-past-the-post' by a system of proportional representation considered by a constitutional convention demographically representative of the population, followed by a referendum." [Loughborough]

LOST (for 5, against 9, abstentions 6)

4.34 VOTE 31: Insert "State power should re-distributed to national, regional and local elected councils through a process that will include referendums on self determination." [Len Arthur]

LOST (overwhelmingly)

4.35 VOTE 32: Insert "We would replace the current practice of always voting on a Thursday with voting on weekends.

We would research into the possibility of electronic voting. Clearly, if this is implemented we would need to be sure that the votes were protected from the possibility of fraud and guaranteed to be secure and secret. [Loughborough]

PASSED (for 9, against 8, abstentions 3)

4.36 VOTE 33: Delete all references to abolishing the monarchy [Reading]

LOST (unanimous)

4.37 VOTE 34: Insert [Box] Internet freedoms

Governments and businesses regularly try to dominate and control the internet, using copyright laws and intellectual property rules to harass people and limit access to culture. The scandal of intelligence agencies reading our emails and snooping on our online histories must end. Left Unity is in favour of internet freedom, an end to arbitrary censorship and support for the right to privacy online.[Lambeth]

PASSED (unanimously)

4.38 VOTE 35:Delete 'and workfare' Insert at end of paragraph: "We will abolish all forced labour on welfare to work schemes ('workfare') and institute meaningful training courses for future jobs." [Lambeth]

PASSED (unanimously)

4.39 VOTE 36: Insert "is a club for bankers and big business. It" [Barnet]

PASSED (unanimously)

4.40 VOTE 37: [box] Support for Palestine

"Left Unity stands in solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle against oppression and dispossession. To this end, Left Unity supports the call by scores of Palestinian organisations (including all Palestinian trade unions) for a campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel until it complies with its obligations under international law." [Dorset, Hackney and Tower Hamlets, Lambeth]

PASSED (unanimously)

VOTE 38: "The use of positive language throughout would be an improvement: i.e. in all cases of 'we would' replace with 'we will' ." [Preston]

LOST (overwhelmingly)

5 Order of Business

5.1 It was agreed that reports and motions proposed to be taken at Sunday's (1/3/2015) EC should, time permitting be taken today or be postponed to future meeting

5.2 It was agreed that the LGBTQ amendment should taken under the Safe Space item

5.3 It was proposed to take the Waltham Forest motion on standing in Bristol West as an emergency motion. This was defeated

6 UK Constitution

6.1 Steve Freeman presented the report and policy document. He explained that he had been brought in to tidy up the policy document a week before conference and that it had been passed by the other members of the commission by 8 to 4.

Steve Freeman explained that the policy drew on three strands a) the agreement of the people 1649; b) Tony Benn's The Commonwealth of Britain Bill (CBB) and the Scottish Independence Bill (SIB). The policy was embryonic in its development and need further consultation.

Steve Freeman proposed that it should go to the branches for discussion with feedback taken at a future National Council.

LOST (Overwhelmingly)

6.2 After some discussion it was decided to revitalise the Constitutional Commission with possible new or additional convenors. A request for new/additional convenors was to be sent to branches and that the current Commission paper should be put on the 'discussion' page of the LU website.

PASSED (overwhelmingly)

6.3 A vote of thanks was given for Steve Freeman

PASSED (unanimous)

7 Housing

7.1 It was noted that a number of the proposals from the Bristol Branch to the Housing Policy document were uncontroversial and acceptable to the Housing Commission.

The meeting agreed the following bullet points could be incorporated into the document:

- To end the right to buy
- To end the handing over the management of council and other publicly-funded housing to Tenants Management Organisations (TMOs)
- Second homes to be subject to increased taxation
- To encourage and support housing coops and collectively managed self-build projects within an overall local housing strategy
- To license the use of council and housing association property awaiting renovation to non-profit housing groups at minimal or no rent.

PASSED (unanimous)

It was agreed to insert "to end the right to buy" into the manifesto.

PASSED (unanimous)

7.2 After discussion and slight amendment to the original proposals, i.e. the inclusion of the word 'chosen', the meeting agreed that the following bulletin point should be added

Housing provision to cater for a variety of chosen household compositions, such as units for communal living and single-person/small-household units with some shared facilities

PASSED (overwhelmingly)

8 Social Security

8.1 Eleanor Firman gave a report back on the Social Security Commission that has not met since the conference. Eleanor reflected on her experience of the Commission which turned out to be one of the most contentious areas of policy within Left Unity. In some ways this is inevitable given the political breadth of membership. Eleanor explained that the Commission had pushed each other's "buttons", particularly with regard to: Basic/Citizens Income, Contributory Benefits; and productive and non-productive labour.

8.2 The meeting accepted Eleanor Firman's report including in principle the proposed actions:

- To hold a Day Event to discuss the topics below open to all within next 3 months. Those seeking to take part in SS Commission thereafter should register by an agreed date.
- The Social Security Commission report back three months after that date on items where consensus has been reached, only.

PASSED (unanimous)

9 Safe Spaces

As Felicity Dowling was unable to attend it was decided not to take her report and the LGBTQ Caucus amendment.

It was agreed that this item should be deferred to the next National Committee due in April 2015 and that in meanwhile the LGBTQ caucus should contact Felicity Dowling to see if some consensus could be reached on development of a safer space/solidarity policy.

PASSED (overwhelmingly)

10 General Election

10.1 It was reported that:

- Stewart Weston was endorsed for Bristol West at the last NC
- Terry Stewart was endorsed for Hackney South but since withdrawn
- A candidate is current being selected in Stockport.
- That there is ongoing discussion about standing in Liverpool

10.2 The meeting endorsed the following candidates:

- Bruce Whitehead - an Edinburgh constituency, Scotland (unanimous)
- Simon Hardy - Vauxhall, London (unanimous)
- Edmund Potts - Exeter, South West (unanimous)
- Nick Wrack - Camberwell & Peckham, London (majority in favour)
- Stephen Hall - Leigh, North West (unanimous)
- Kingsley Abrams - Bermondsey & Old Southwark, London (unanimous)

10.3 The National Council agreed to empower the national nominating officer to decide on applications from all local election candidates, as well as general election candidates who come forward after this meeting.

PASSED (unanimous)

10.4 The meeting agreed the following motion:

So far our candidates for the general election are all men. We believe this is an unacceptable situation. The national council agrees that the nominating officer will issue a national appeal for women general election candidates, then hold national selection(s) using online voting to select women candidates up to the number of men. This is permitted under section 16(b) of the constitution which allows candidates to be selected through a "democratic election process at local, regional or national levels" .

PASSED (unanimous)

11 Executive Committee

11.1 It was agreed that the next EC should have the power to approve or not approve all resolutions deferred to it

PASSED (overwhelmingly)

11.2 As time run out the motion concerning the "anti-austerity appeal" was deferred to the next EC.

The meeting closed at 5 pm