

## NC Minutes 20 February 2016

Attendance: Kate H, Kathy L, Richard F, Doug T, Andrew B, Terry C, Matthew C, Bob WF, Louise C, Bob W, Stephen H, Dave W, Fred L, Hazel D, Barbara S, Felicity D, Bianca T, Pete M, Stephen G, Yassamine M, Jack C.

Apologies: Andy R, Jon D, Oliver N, Eve T, Sarah Mc, Pip T, Joseph H, Len A

Chairs: Fred L, Doug T, Kate H

Minutes: Kathy L

### 1.Minutes of NC 30 January and matters arising

#### *(i)Internal Elections*

Terry C, Nominations Officer reported that the closing date for nominations was Friday 26 February.

#### *(ii)Membership and Branches*

Stephen H said he had not yet received for the North West region the list of active branches and new members that it had been agreed at the last NC should be sent to each region. Andrew B (National Treasurer) reported there had been a delay due to the resignation from LU by Membership and Communications officer Simon H but that the information would be circulated when possible.

#### *(iii) Political Strategy*

-Building LU after conference

Terry Conway said the words 'on the website' needed to be deleted from the end of para 7 as her paper on 'Building Left Unity after conference' was intended for LU members and activists only.

-Momentum

Last paragraph. Agreed to add 'of LU electoral work' to the last line. This would then read: 'It was AGREED that the suspension of LU electoral work should remain in place as per the national conference decision until a review of LU electoral work at the next NC meeting on 20 February. It was pointed out by the Chair that it was on the agenda for today's meeting.

-Motion on Momentum

It was requested that the original motion on Momentum be reproduced as part of Appendix I as well as the amended resolution agreed.

#### *(iv) AOB*

-Improving website

Andrew B gave an update. Members were being approached to contribute material for the website. Penny A is working on the website, newsletter and social media work. Simon H was being asked to hand over the members' internal Facebook Page data. Felicity had volunteered to produce a map of the social media LU is using. A more detailed discussion would be scheduled for the next EC.

The NC minutes of 30 January 2016 were **AGREED**.

## 2. Motion on Momentum and Electoral Policy

The motion by Richard F and amendments by Doug T were tabled for discussion.

Richard F, introducing his motion, stressed the following:

It now appeared that new proposals by the NC of Momentum on keeping Momentum as a Labour Party organisation would appear to rule out LU being able to play a major role. LU should continue to be a “critical friend” of the Corbyn leadership and seek constructive working relationships with Momentum at all levels while maintaining its own campaigning activities under the twin track approach previously agreed by conference. On electoral policy Richard argued that LU should not stand in this year’s national elections but that branches could determine whether to stand in local elections and, with the approval of the National Committee, would consider standing on a case-by-case basis in any by-elections that come up. As agreed by LU conference in November 2015 the party would review its electoral policy at the next national policy conference.

Doug T, introducing his amendments, said he had consulted a member of the Momentum National Committee and that the creation of a category of “supporters” of Momentum might allow LU members to participate locally under that category but that the situation was not yet clear. He argued that in the meantime it would jeopardise LU relations with Momentum and the LP if LU stood its own candidates in national, regional or local elections and that no LU candidates should stand until the next national conference of LU had reviewed the situation. LU should support the Corbyn movement by continuing to mobilise around our priority issues such as Trident, cuts, migrants and the environment.

In the discussion some NC members were concerned that, where LU branches had successfully established themselves as adversaries of cruel austerity measures being introduced by Labour councils and had won a high campaigning profile generally, those branches should be able to stand LU candidates in forthcoming local elections if they so decided. Others felt that to stand against a Corbyn-led LP would close LU off from Corbyn and the movement around him.

Proposal by Terry C to delete paras (b) and (c) concerning Left Unity branches contacting local Momentum branches was **AGREED**.

Doug T’s amendments were **AGREED**.

Matthew C proposed the following amendment: “LU will encourage branches to support anti-cuts campaigns standing in local elections.” This was **AGREED**.

The resolution of Richard F as amended was **AGREED**. (See Appendix I.)

## 3. Motion on Emergency National Conference

Jack C moved the motion (Appendix II) from the Communist Platform which was seconded by Yassamine M. He said that in the changed political situation the Communist Platform now believed LU to be wrong programmatically and organisationally and that was why the motion called for an emergency national conference. However, he added that since the motion had been drafted the Communist Platform had decided to dissolve and its members were withdrawing from LU. The motion was **DEFEATED**.

## 4. Conference follow up

Remaining motions held over from Conference and referred to the NC were discussed.

It was AGREED that Motions 16, 17 18a and 18b on election strategy re-assessment FELL because they had been overtaken by decisions on election strategy taken since.

It was AGREED that Motions 22a, 28, 28a, 38 were no longer applicable.

It was AGREED that Motions 26, 26a 27, 27a, 27b, 30, 31, 32, 33, 33a, 34 would be referred to the policy commissions or to the next policy conference.

The following motions were referred to the NC for voting by previous NC of 30 January:

Motion 19 (Haringey) on Struggle of Kurdish People – PASSED

Motion 20 (Leeds North and East) on PKK and PFLP – PASSED

Motion 21 (MacNair, Isaacson) on Greece FELL because proposers no long in LU

Motions 21A (Cambridge) amending motion 21 on Greece FELL because 21 had fallen

Motion 22 (Haringey) on Greece FELL – proposers withdrew pending wider discussion on Greece

Motion 22A (Southwark) FELL because branch no longer exists

Motion 22B (Cambridge) amending Motion 22 FELL because 22 had fallen

Motion 23 (Teesside, Sheffield) on imperialist intervention FELL because proposers no longer in LU

Motion 23A (Teesside, Sheffield) FELL because amending 23 which had fallen.

Motion 24 (Stockport) on Prostitution Policy referred to next policy conference

Motion 25 (LGBT caucus, Lambeth, Croydon) on Sex Work – referred to next policy conference.

Motion 25A (Waltham Forest) on Sex Work – referred with 25 to next policy conference.

Motion 29 (Glasgow South) on Support for GM research FELL because branch no longer exists.

Motion 35 (Campbell/Hurley) on Culture REFERRED back to national policy conference because new area of policy.

Motion 36 (Birmingham) on Assisted Suicide – PASSED

Motion 36A (Waltham Forest) addition to Motion 36 – PASSED

Motion 37 (Teesside, Mark Lewis/ Ben Lewis) on the standing army and the people's militia – FELL because proposers no longer in LU

Motion 37A (Teesside, Sheffield) addition to Motion 37 – FELL because original motion fell.

Motion 38 (Croydon) on Abolishing the monarchy – PASSED.

Motion 39 (Norwich) on EU Referendum and voting system – FELL – out of time

Motion 40 (Freeman/Caplan) on Acts of Union – FELL because factually incorrect.

Further proposals on conference motions follow up:

- Matthew C proposed that the next NC/EC takes a report on LU work with Greece. Andrew B and Felicity D to prepare. AGREED

- Felicity D proposed a women's meeting be organised which could have Sex Work and Prostitution Policy on its agenda and thus help to formulate LU policy proposals on these issues. AGREED
- Following up on Motion 28A proposing a Climate Charter as a campaigning tool following the Paris Climate Summit, it was AGREED to ask Bob W to update proposals for the Charter for consideration at the next EC 19 March.

## **5. Report from meeting of European Left Party**

On behalf of LU Principal Speaker Felicity D had attended the European Left Party Executive Board meeting in Berlin in February hosted by Die Linke where LU has observer status. She reported that a discussion document on how the ELP sees the situation in Europe and what the response of the Left should be was being compiled and that LU had the opportunity to make suggestions. There were omissions so far, for example, nothing on the situation of women in the EU. Felicity was thanked for her report and it was AGREED to discuss this further at the EC and to ask her to represent LU at the next ELP meetings on this document.

## **6. Correspondence**

LU had received an invitation to attend the annual congress of the Red-Green Alliance in Denmark 14-16 May. It was AGREED to send a representative, and to reciprocate by inviting the RGA to attend a future LU meeting.

## **7. Announcements**

27 Feb Anti-Trident national CND demo. Meet Marble Arch at 10.30am.

6 March National demo 'Stop Turkey's War on the Kurds'

13 March Kill Housing Bill demo.

19 March national demo 'Stand up to Racism and Fascism'

16 April People's Assembly national demo backed by a number of trade unions.

## **8. AOB**

*-EU Referendum.*

It was suggested that branches be encouraged to hold a meeting on this with speakers from LU or the campaign Another Europe is Possible. Materials were needed to assist them. Birmingham branch was planning a meeting on 'Freedom of Movement'

-The Left has to take up austerity and democracy which are currently missing from the AEP campaign manifesto.

- LU should put out a news release on EU Referendum and get migrant/refugee speakers on the platform of any LU meetings.

*-Venue for next LU Conference*

Kate H (National Secretary) proposed that Liverpool should be the venue for LU national Conference on 29<sup>th</sup> October. Felicity D agreed to look into the possibility.

## **Appendix I**

### **Motion on MOMENTUM AND ELECTORAL POLICY (proposed by Richard Farnos, seconded by Joseph Healy)**

#### **MOMENTUM AND ELECTORAL POLICY**

##### **1) This National Committee Notes:**

Notes the decisions made by the Momentum's National Committee on 7th February 2016 seems to excludes from membership any member of "other political parties", regardless of whether or not they stand against the Labour Party in elections or not. That this decision seems to exclude members of Left Unity from being members of Momentum

##### **2) This National Committee believes that:**

That the decision of the Momentum's National Committee only serves the short term interest of the Labour Party over the long term interests of the working class. Potentially it could created an iron wall between those who support Corbyn leadership outside of the Labour party from those within and may doom Momentum to becoming a just another internal lobby inside the Labour party, making the defeat of the Corbyn leadership more likely.

##### **3) This National Committee resolves that:**

- a) Left Unity is still supportive of the Corbyn leaders, and will not do anything to actively undermine it. In so doing Left Unity reserve the right to be a critical friend.
- b) Left Unity should continue to seek constructive working relationships with Momentum locally, regionally or nationally as outline in the motion past at LU National Committee in January 2016
- c) Left Unity will not stand in this year's national elections as agreed at Left Unity Conference in November 2015.
- d) That Left Unity branches shall be free to determine to whether they stand in this year's local elections in the knowledge that support from the party national may be minimal.
- e) That Left Unity will consider standing in by-elections for the Westminster Parliament case by case, subject to the commitment of the local branch and approval of the National Committee (although this decision may be made over the National Committee e- list).
- f) That Left Unity shall review electoral policy at the next national policy conference as agreed at Left Unity Conference in November 2015.

##### **4) This National Committee instructs and asks:**

- a) Left Unity's National Secretary to write to the National Committee of Momentum in order to: congratulate the formation of Momentum's national structure; express our concerns as seek clarification on whether Left Unity members can be members of Momentum; and ask how they feel

that Left Unity and Momentum can productively work together at a national, regional level and local level.

b) Left Unity branches to write to local Momentum branches, that address that same concerns itemised in 4a.

c) Left Unity branches reports back the responses from local Momentum branches to the Left Unity National Secretary.

d) Local branches decide whether they plan to stand candidates in forthcoming local elections and report back to Nomination Officer before the next Executive or National Committee (which ever is earlier)

e) That the next Executive or National Committee (which ever is earlier) shall consider what support can be given nationally to branches that seek to stand in candidates Local elections.

### **Amendment to motion - MOMENTUM AND ELECTORAL POLICY (proposed by Doug Thorpe)**

**Proposed additions are shown in square brackets in [Red]**

**Proposed deletions are shown with ~~strike-through~~**

#### **1) This National Committee Notes:**

Notes the decisions made by the Momentum's National Committee on 7th February 2016 seems to excludes from membership any member of "other political parties", regardless of whether or not they stand against the Labour Party in elections or not. That this decision seems to exclude members of Left Unity from being members of Momentum. [The decision also retains a category of "Supporters" who can attend local groups provided they are not a supporter of any organisation opposed to the Labour Party. It is not yet clear whether members of Left Unity can participate locally as supporters.]

#### **2) This National Committee believes that:**

That the decision of the Momentum's National Committee only serves the short term interest of the Labour Party over the long term interests of the working class. Potentially it could created an iron wall between those who support Corbyn leadership outside of the Labour party from those within and may doom Momentum to becoming a just another internal lobby inside the Labour party, making the defeat of the Corbyn leadership more likely.

#### **3) This National Committee resolves that:**

a) Left Unity is still supportive of the Corbyn leaders, and will not do anything to actively undermine it. In so doing Left Unity reserve the right to be a critical friend.

b) Left Unity should continue to seek constructive working relationships with Momentum locally, regionally or nationally as outline in the motion past at LU National Committee in January 2016

c) Left Unity will not stand in this year's national elections as agreed at Left Unity Conference in November 2015. [Until the next national conference, Left Unity will also not stand candidates in National, regional or local elections].

~~Delete d) That Left Unity branches shall be free to determine to whether they stand in this year's local elections in the knowledge that support from the party national may be minimal.~~

~~Delete e) That Left Unity will consider standing in by elections for the Westminster Parliament case by case, subject to the commitment of the local branch and approval of the National Committee (although this decision may be made over the National Committee e-list).~~

f) **[d)]** That Left Unity shall review electoral policy at the next national policy conference as agreed at Left Unity Conference in November 2015.

#### **4) This National Committee instructs and asks:**

a) Left Unity's National Secretary to write to the National Committee of Momentum in order to: congratulate the formation of Momentum's national structure; express our concerns as seek clarification on whether Left Unity members can be members **[or supporters]** of Momentum; and ask how they feel that Left Unity and Momentum can productively work together at a national, regional level and local level.

b) Left Unity branches to write to local Momentum branches, that address that same concerns itemised in 4a.

c) Left Unity branches reports back the responses from local Momentum branches to the Left Unity National Secretary.

~~Delete d) Local branches decide whether they plan to stand candidates in forthcoming local elections and report back to Nomination Officer before the next Executive or National Committee (which ever is earlier)~~

~~Delete e) That the next Executive or National Committee (which ever is earlier) shall consider what support can be given nationally to branches that seek to stand in candidates Local elections.~~

Resolution agreed after amendments:

1) This National Council notes that:  
the decisions made by the Momentum's National Committee on 7th February 2016 seem to exclude from membership any member of "other political parties", regardless of whether they stand against the Labour Party in elections or not. That this decision seems to exclude members of Left Unity from being members of Momentum. The decision also retains a category of "Supporters" who can attend local groups provided they are not a supporter of any organisation opposed to the Labour Party. It is not yet clear whether members of Left Unity can participate locally as supporters.

2) This National Council believes that:  
the decision of the Momentum's National Committee only serves the short term interest of the Labour Party over the long term interests of the working class. Potentially it could create an iron wall between those who support Corbyn leadership outside of the Labour party from those within and may doom Momentum to becoming a just another internal lobby inside the Labour party, making the defeat of the Corbyn leadership more likely.

3) This National Council resolves that:

- a) Left Unity is still supportive of the Corbyn leaders, and will not do anything to actively undermine it. In so doing Left Unity reserve the right to be a critical friend.
- b) Left Unity should continue to seek constructive working relationships with Momentum locally, regionally or nationally as outlined in the motion passed at LU National Committee in January 2016.
- c) Left Unity will not stand in this year's national elections as agreed at Left Unity Conference in November 2015. Until the next national conference, Left Unity will also not stand candidates in national, regional or local elections.
- d) Left Unity shall review electoral policy at the next national policy conference as agreed at Left Unity Conference in November 2015.
- e) Left Unity will encourage branches to support anti-cuts campaigns standing in local elections.

4) This National Council instructs and asks:

Left Unity's National Secretary to write to the National Committee of Momentum in order to congratulate the committee on the formation of Momentum's national structure; express our concerns and seek clarification on whether Left Unity members can be members or supporters of Momentum; and ask if they feel that Left Unity and Momentum can productively work together at a national, regional level and local level.

## **Appendix II**

### **Motion on emergency national conference**

Left Unity modelled itself on soft left anti-austerity organisations such as Die Linke, Syriza and Podemos. This went hand in hand with claims that the Labour Party was irreformable, had to all intents and purposes become just another capitalist party, etc. The operative conclusion being that there was a wide space on the left of the Labour Party for an organisation committed to the “spirit of 45”.

Because of the victory of Jeremy Corbyn, because of the decision of Momentum to emphasise internal battles and changing the Labour Party, because of the decision of Momentum to bar members of organisations which stand candidates against Labour, it is clear that Left Unity is now hopelessly adrift strategically.

Since the foundation of Left Unity national conferences have voted down motions sponsored by the Communist Platform that in their totality would have provided the vital elements of a Marxist programme. The last national conference soundly rejected the Communist Platform's perspective of fighting for affiliation to the Labour Party and transforming the Labour Party, ie, into a permanent united front of the working class. The last national conference also soundly rejected moves to reorganise Left Unity so as to base it on the principles of democratic centralism.

At the last national council meeting we were informed that only national conference can alter Left Unity policy. That between conferences the national council exists merely to implement agreed policy (this was in the context of debating our attitude towards the EU referendum, ie, the call for an active boycott was in effect ruled out of order).



Hence, if Left Unity is to have any worthwhile future an emergency national conference must be called as a matter of extreme urgency. The emergency national conference must happen within one month. To ensure the maximum attendance of Left Unity members the emergency conference should be held in London.

There should be three main items on the agenda.

1. Labour. The existing attitude towards the Labour Party and Momentum were always mistaken. Fudging on whether or not to stand candidates against Labour is no longer sustainable. Left Unity should join those calling for the Labour Party to change its rules so as to once again allow political parties of the working class to affiliate. Left Unity must commit itself to radically democratising the Labour Party and equipping it with a genuine socialist programme (not a revival of the old Clause 4 state capitalism).

2. Organisation. Left Unity must be reorganised on the basis of the principles of democratic centralism: ie, unity in action, freedom of criticism. As part of that the direct election of principal speakers, media officer, national secretary, treasurer, etc, would be ended. National conference would elect the national council and the national council would appoint and replace officers as it sees fit.

3. Programme. Left Unity must arm itself with a Marxist programme, ie, something along the lines of the classic minimum-maximum programmes of the German Social Democratic Party, French Workers' Party, the Russian Social Democratic Party, etc.