

October 2012 ● Socialist Workers Party pre-conference

BULLETIN 1

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SWP NATIONAL CONFERENCE, CENTRAL LONDON, 4-6 JANUARY 2013

Dear Comrade,

Welcome to the SWP's Internal Bulletin 1 for our forthcoming conference. I hope you will read and consider the submissions and, if you wish, send in your own contribution.

The deadlines for future submissions are:

- IB2: Friday 26 October, 5pm
- IB3: Monday 26 November, 8am

Please keep contributions as short as possible and send them to charlie@swp.org.uk (please do not send contributions to other email addresses). Comrades who send a contribution will receive an acknowledgement from the National Office within three working days. If the National Office has not acknowledged your contribution please contact us as soon as possible.

Take part!

We want conference to be a democratic event in which comrades can fully participate. Branches should make arrangements now to enable all members to be part of the conference discussion, and to make it possible for any member to put themselves forward as a delegate.

Every registered member with an email address on our system receives this and subsequent bulletins by email. But branches should also think about those comrades who do not have email, or require a printed copy.

Printed versions of this bulletin can be ordered from the National Office at £1.25 each. Email your order to charlie@swp.org.uk or ring 020 7819 1170. Payment needs to be made in advance by card or cheque.

Aggregates

These meetings, open to every member in a district, are where delegates to SWP Conference are elected. They are also a chance for every member to discuss our perspectives. This year they will be even more critical since they will take place soon after the 20 October demos, around the time of possible mass strikes, the Unite the Resistance conference on 17 November and the student demo on 21 November.

Aggregate dates will be circulated in Party Notes. In addition each registered member will receive notification of their aggregate.

Conference procedures

We want the greatest possible democracy and participation in the conference. The main method of discussion is though what we call commissions. These are documents drawn up at the end of conference sessions which summarise the main strands of discussion and action to be taken. These can be amended. And if there is more than one view in the discussion then there can be alternative commissions which are then voted on.

This method is democratic, transparent, flexible and open to the input of delegates.

It means that the very latest developments and the insights and arguments that appear in the debate can be reflected in the party's decisions.

Commissions allow delegates to listen to the experiences from the rest of the country, consider the arguments put forwards and then make decisions about what they think.

However it is not a method that people are used to for trade union or student union conferences. We will make sure it is fully and repeatedly explained at the conference.

We also want districts to hold meetings after delegates are elected to introduce them to the way conference works and to deal with any questions in an unhurried atmosphere.

Sometimes there's a need for more specific debates. These can usually take the form of commissions or amendments to commissions. But recently both the CC and delegates have increasingly submitted motions. These can be useful but should not, we think, be the main method of discussion. That should stay as the commissions.

The Party Council in September passed a procedure for submission of motions and agreed that motions should have some democratic basis - branch or fraction or district support or come from the NC or CC.

The procedure for motions

- All motions must be passed in time for them to appear in one of the Internal Bulletins so that everyone is aware of them in advance. That means the final date for the submission of motions is the closing date for IB3 - 8am, Monday 26 November 2012. They must be passed by at least one properly-organised meeting of an SWP branch, or fraction, or district, or aggregate or the NC or the CC. We are not going to define exactly what a properly-organised branch, fraction or district meeting is! Let's be sensible about it. It means you follow the normal processes.

- All amendments to motions must be in two weeks before conference - 11am on Friday 21 December 2012. They would need to be passed by one of the same bodies as for motions. Branches rarely meet in the two weeks before conference, so this time limit is essentially saying that amendments have to go through some sort of democratic process.

- The fact that a branch or district or fraction passes a motion for debate at conference does not in any way mandate that branch or district or fraction's delegates. Delegates are not mandated and have a free hand as to how they vote. It is perfectly possible to change your mind after hearing the debate: this is the strength of the commissions system. The SWP conference is not a trade union conference where delegates are sent from a branch with a clear political instruction as to how to vote on certain key issues.

- All motions and amendments should be sent to charlie@swp.org.uk (please do not send contributions to other email addresses). Comrades who send a contribution will receive an acknowledgement from the National Office within three working days. If the National Office has not acknowledged your contribution please contact us as soon as possible.

The commissions process enables “emergency” matters to be raised.

The Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC) will receive the motions as they come in, and suggest in which section of the agenda they should be taken. The CAC proposals would be discussed at the start of conference. They could be challenged in the normal manner.

The CAC would also deal with objections such as “Fort William branch did not properly discuss this motion that has been submitted in our name” or “Maesteg branch submitted a motion but the national secretary has repressed it because it was critical of him” and report their decisions to conference – which could be challenged in the normal manner.

Childcare

The question of childcare is an important one for all comrades, but particularly for women. Given we live in a society where the ruling ideas say that women are expected to bear the main burden of looking after children, it is women who are hit hardest when there is no consideration of this issue.

It is very difficult to provide a full crèche on the Marxism model for conference. At Marxism we use a combination of the (legally required) trained childcare workers and volunteers. It’s hugely expensive but we do it because we recognise that it’s necessary.

The cost is simply too high for us to provide that level of crèche for every party event.

But depending on the age/situation of the child involved, the delegate’s district could make provision to help, or a comrade could bring a friend to look after the child and be provided with a room at the event and some assistance, or the child could stay with someone else in London.

None of this is ideal, but it’s possible to sort out such issues. Conference is open to all.

Access

The conference venue is fully accessible. If there are any other needs that delegates require, please contact the National Office and we will seek to help.

If you have any questions about conference please contact charlie@swp.org.uk or phone 020 7819 1170 or write to PO Box 42184, London SW8 2WD.

Charlie Kimber, SWP national secretary

PERSPECTIVES – A PROLONGED CRISIS

For a half decade the economic crisis has been the central fact of political life. The crisis's duration and depth strengthens our conviction that it is rooted in the long-term development of capitalism. It is an event comparable in scale with the Great Depression of the 1930s, flowing out of several decades in which the rate of profit across the core of the system remained at historically low levels. While the expansion of credit could, for a time, drive the system forwards, this process was ultimately unsustainable. We are today witnessing the consequences of a crisis that was years in the making.

Party publications, especially *International Socialism*, have traced the development of the crisis from the outset; here we will merely note a few features of the latest phase. In the US, the largest economy, growth remains extremely sluggish, and is accompanied by high levels of unemployment. China, whose growth still depends to a large extent on exports, combined with astonishing levels of investment in export-led areas of its economy, has seen its rate of growth decline; it remains to be seen whether its rulers will avoid a "hard landing", but it is clear that China cannot exempt itself from the problems in the world system.

The most important fault-lines run through the Eurozone. Here the growth of sovereign debt in the weaker economies during the crisis exposed the structural problems created when highly diverse economies opted to share a currency, the Euro, and a central bank, the ECB. The prospect of a second sovereign debt default by Greece, or a default by Spain or Italy—either of them too big to be bailed out by existing rescue funds—followed by the potential breakup of the Euro, poses real dangers for the European ruling classes. But so too does the prospect of the stronger economies, notably Germany, shouldering the burden of debts accumulated by the weaker ones. This dilemma has led to sharp debates among Europe's rulers as they put forward divergent strategies and seek to minimise the pain for their capitalists. Inasmuch as there has been a political consensus at the top, it has been to accompany each emergency intervention with savage attacks on the public sector of the countries being "rescued", and to attempt to squeeze workers ever-harder. These policies have both caused enormous hardship and exacerbated the crisis.

Increasingly the picture is of relative stagnation accompanied by periodic eruptions of panic, with the interval between these eruptions, and the respite for markets, growing ever shorter. A sustained and powerful recovery from crisis will depend

on sufficient destruction and devaluation of capital, along with attacks on the working class and the collapse of bad debts, which together can restore profitability. Thus far the signs are that these processes have not developed to a sufficient extent for such a recovery to come about. That means that the crisis still has much further to go. It means continued economic, political and ideological turmoil, and it means that the crisis will continue to shape our perspective.

Resistance and polarisation

Crisis does not *automatically* lead to resistance. Nonetheless, the extent of division at the top of society, which undermines the ruling class's capacity to rule in the traditional way, and bitterness at the bottom, which diminishes the ruled class's willingness to be ruled in the traditional way, can, over time, ripen into struggle.

Several countries in Europe have seen powerful workers' movements develop during the crisis. France, Italy, Portugal and Spain have each seen mass strikes in recent years, but by far the highest level of struggle is in Greece.

Greece has seen a general strike on average every six or seven weeks since 2010, and successive actions have begun to crystallise out networks of worker activists who are key to developing the struggle. The mass strikes are accompanied by myriad local and sectional actions, along with workplace occupations. There are even glimpses, still at an embryonic stage, of workers beginning to exercise their power in more profound ways, notably in the case of media workers at *Eleftherotypia* who produced two issues of their newspaper under their own control. The degree of struggle in Greece reflects a recent history of working class mobilisation and social movements, along with the presence of a big radical left, but it also shows how the impact of the crisis can lead to explosions from below and how, over time, these movements can develop confidence and organisation. The stakes are high: the depth of the economic and political crisis in Greece gives a glimpse of conditions that could give rise to a revolutionary situation in Europe in the 21st century. Similar tendencies exist, so far in considerably less pronounced form, across much of Europe.

A year ago, there was little sign of the resistance finding a political expression. But the past 12 months have seen a pattern of anti-incumbent voting as ruling mainstream parties have lost elections—a process that puts further pressure on governments, which face the prospect of being removed by the Troika (the ECB, EU and IMF) if they do not implement harsh enough austerity and by their electorate if they do. The crisis of mainstream politics has led to polarisation.

The far right has grown in many European countries. So in Greece Chrysi Avgi

(Golden Dawn), an openly Nazi organisation, took 7 percent in June's elections. In France Marine Le Pen of the Front National (FN) took 6.4 million votes in the presidential elections. Eastern Europe too has seen the growth of far-right forces, notably the Jobbik party that won 15 percent of the vote in the 2010 Hungarian elections.

On the left, the main beneficiaries of the crisis have in many cases been traditional reformist parties, especially where they have been out of office for a period. The victory of François Hollande in the French presidential election—accompanied by success of his Socialist Party in legislative and local elections—is the most obvious example. But there are also signs that the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) is reviving as discontent with Angela Merkel grows, with the party winning an outright majority in Germany's most populous state, North Rhine-Westphalia, in the spring. Despite shifting to the right over recent decades and weakening their ties to workers' organisations, traditional reformist organisations have not severed their connection to the working class. They can win support where they seem to offer a less vicious version of austerity.

Despite the resilience of traditional reformism, in some cases the space to the left of these parties is being filled by more radical forces. In France Jean-Luc Mélenchon, standing on an anti-austerity and anti-racist platform, took 11 percent of the poll in the first round of the presidential elections. In Spain the Communist-led Izquierda Unida was polling at around 13 percent over the summer. Again, Greece shows this pattern at its most spectacular, with the Syriza coalition winning nearly 27 percent in the June elections; no radical left party has polled higher in Europe since the 1970s.

The rise of left reformism

These left reformist formations have differing roots. Mélenchon's Front de Gauche combines the French Communist Party along with a left breakaway from the Socialist Party; Syriza draws together most of the Euro-communist elements that emerged from Greece's Communist Party with smaller far left groups; the Dutch Socialist Party, which retained 15 seats in parliament in September elections, began life as a Maoist organisation before breaking through in the mid-1990s and drawing in wider layers of supporters opposed to neoliberalism.

What such organisations share in common is their capacity to challenge the established left parties by rejecting the consensus of pro-austerity policies. They remain, however, left *reformist*. Seeing them as part of the spectrum of reformism, even if they are more dynamic and radical than we have become accustomed to, helps us to answer two important questions: can they promote the development

of anti-capitalist struggle? And, what are their limitations?

On the first question, we should welcome the development of these forces. They reflect struggle from below, or at least an aspiration for it. The success of these organisations can raise the confidence and expectations of the working class, and strengthen the left more generally.

Any notion that the working class once roused to struggle will automatically turn away from its traditional organisations and gravitate towards the revolutionary left, which remains tiny across Europe, is misguided. What Leon Trotsky wrote of revolutions is true more generally:

“The fundamental political process of the revolution...consists in the gradual comprehension by a class of the problems arising from the social crisis—the active orientation of the masses by a method of successive approximations.

“The different stages of a revolutionary process, certified by a change of parties in which the more extreme always supersedes the less, express the growing pressure to the left of the masses—so long as the swing of the movement does not run into objective obstacles.”

Workers learn the limits of reformism through their experience of it, and to the degree that their struggles teach them to look to their own power—and there has to be a credible alternative for them to move to.

It is a mistake for socialists who achieve some electoral success to become obsessed with winning votes. Olivier Besancenot, of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), won over 4 percent in the 2002 and 2007 French presidential elections, considerably more than the Communist Party. The successor to the LCR, the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA), was initially one of the most exciting developments on the left for years. But its focus was very much on the electoral terrain, where it was eclipsed in the most recent presidential election by the Front de Gauche. This, in turn, exacerbated the NPA's deep internal crisis. In the absence of an orientation on struggle, the Front de Gauche outdid the NPA in projecting a radical, but apparently more realistic, solution to the problems faced by workers.

It is important to be clear about the limits of reformism. Because it aspires to capture existing institutions, particularly the state, and work within them to offer piecemeal reforms without overthrowing capitalism, reformism is limited by what the system can deliver and what the capitalist ruling class are prepared to concede. This means that left forces which for a time effectively express the desire for change can lose support. This seems to be what is happening in Germany, where Die Linke, which drew together the remnants of the East German Communists with a major split from the

SPD, has seen its support decline as its voters lose faith in its ability to really improve their fortunes.

Even in the most favourable scenario—say, if Syriza had won the June elections in Greece in a context of rising workers' struggle—the ascent of left reformists to government does not resolve matters. Any party prepared to genuinely break with austerity would face pressure from capitalists domestically and from the European ruling classes beyond, which would seek to bend the new government to their will or, failing that, to remove it from office, whether by constitutional means or not. Struggle from below is decisive in such circumstances, and this struggle will be most effective where revolutionaries are able to intervene as an independent factor within it.

Where does this leave those of us whose goal is the creation of mass revolutionary parties? It is necessary to engage in common battles with workers who are influenced by reformism, in either its traditional or left forms, and to conclude agreements with the leaders of these tendencies for joint action where possible, while simultaneously seeking to win an audience for revolutionary ideas and methods of struggle.

That implies the need for both political clarity and tactical flexibility. Sometimes revolutionaries will benefit from being inside left reformist organisations for a period of time, without ceasing to operate as an independent force. In other situations revolutionaries will be better served operating outside of these organisations, while continuing to participate alongside them in struggle. The fact that our sister organisations in Germany participate in Die Linke, while in the Netherlands they are outside of the Socialist Party and in Greece they are part of an anti-capitalist coalition to the left of Syriza, reflects the differing political realities and the outcome of tactical discussion in these contexts.

The Arab revolutions and imperialism

The revolutionary movements that developed first in Tunisia and Egypt before spreading across the Arab world have faced major challenges both internal and external.

The initial euphoria in Egypt as Hosni Mubarak fell in 2011 was followed by repression meted out by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (Scaf) and its reconstituted security forces. The unity against Mubarak disappeared as some forces sought to end the revolution while others tried to drive it on to conquer new political and social gains. The Muslim Brotherhood, the most important mass political organisation in the Egypt, initially sought an accommodation with Scaf, at the price of serious internal tensions. The Brotherhood's success in the parliamentary elections won it leading positions, but

exposed it to withering criticism for its failure to bring real change.

Noting the Brotherhood's unpopularity, the military chiefs this year seemed poised to clear away the democratic gains of the revolution and install their man, Ahmed Shafik, as president. They drew back when it became obvious that this would spark mass protest, threatening to drive the revolution forward rather than contain it. Scaf had to accept the Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsi as president, but the Brotherhood conceded that the armed forces would retain considerable power. Morsi is caught between his deals with Scaf and the mobilisations in the streets, the squares and the factories. This fast changing situation has posed difficulties for Egypt's revolutionary socialists. One particularly important lesson is the need for the minority, who understand the need to develop the revolution, to use all methods, including elections, to win over wider numbers of workers. In mid-September the possibilities to grow were shown by a new and significant strike wave that at one point spread to almost every area of the country from Alexandria to Aswan.

In addition to internal repression, the Nato-led intervention in Libya last year marked the beginning of new attempts by imperialism to reassert its grip on the region. The fact that the Libyan intervention was directed at the same dictatorship that the revolutionary movement was seeking to overthrow created immense confusion on the left. In the case of Syria the debates have been even sharper, with those who support the uprising being accused of openly or tacitly supporting imperialism. Accepting such arguments would make it impossible for the left to support any revolutionary movement that happened to challenge rulers unpalatable to or in conflict with Western powers.

It is true that the intervention—military in Libya, lower-level involvement so far in Syria—is aimed not simply at toppling Gaddafi or Assad, but also at channelling the revolutionary impulse in directions more favourable to imperialism. But that does not mean that the imperialists will always be successful. That would overstate the power to shape events of Western imperialism, which has suffered a number of blows in this region in recent years. Indeed, regional sub-imperialist powers such as Turkey have so far been the main conduit for support going to some of the revolutionary forces. The assumption that imperialism is all-powerful also understates the complexity of the revolutionary movement in Syria, which still contains popular elements driven from below. It is possible that setbacks faced by the revolution can open the door to intensified intervention and the subversion of the revolutionary process by conservative forces domestically and imperialism abroad. But while there is a genuine revolutionary process unfolding, our position should remain: opposition to intervention but support for

the Arab revolutions.

Our approach to the Stop the War coalition (StW) has reflected this—a desire to maintain the status quo in which StW opposes intervention and supports self-determination, without it taking a stand on the revolution which would split the organisation. But we also insist on the right of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), as an independent component of StW, to put forwards its own distinct position.

Israel's threats to Iran and the continuing possibility of new conflicts remind us that the "war on terror", which has slaughtered millions, has also increased instability. The war in Afghanistan has ever fewer supporters as it is ever more starkly revealed as a bloody but also doomed occupation. The war is not presently a big mobilising issue, but imperialism and the plight of Palestine can suddenly become crucial focuses for resistance if, for example, there is an attack on Iran or further massacres by Israel.

The British situation

Turning from the international picture to that at home, the economic crisis certainly remains the key fact in Britain. The British economy has performed dismally, reflecting its exceptional dependence on global finance and the impact of austerity. This has not, so far, translated into mass unemployment; rather there has been an increase in part-time working and a generalised attempt to hold down wages in both the public and private sectors. Simultaneously, the coalition has driven through, and will continue to escalate, an offensive against central parts of the welfare state.

Up until now, Britain has escaped a serious attack from the bond markets, of the kind seen in Greece, Spain and Italy. But this depends upon market perceptions that austerity is reducing the deficit. However, the weakness of the economy—now in a double-dip recession rather than reviving—means these attempts are failing. When George Osborne rises to give his autumn statement on 5 December he will have to admit that he has missed his borrowing targets by billions. He may well announce still greater cuts and tax rises for the majority of people. The dire economic situation and the need to push through sweeping attacks on the working class and welfare state place tight limits on the coalition's room for manoeuvre.

Weakness of the coalition

Not only is the coalition struggling to drive through the central plank of its policy—austerity—it has also faced a series of humiliating U-turns, over everything from warmed pasties to caravans. Even more seriously, there are now major cracks within the coalition itself.

Neither the Liberal Democrats nor the Tories have an interest in going to the electorate early—they would be too

severely punished at the polls. But David Cameron's acquiescence to the right of his party as it defeated the proposed House of Lords reform did serious damage to the Lib Dems; they in turn refused to support the review of constituency boundaries that would have favoured the Tories at the next election. Increasingly the parties are trying to differentiate themselves, with, for instance, the Lib Dems proposing a mansion tax in an attempt to appeal to voters critical of the coalition's austerity policies. The growing tensions between the two parties are accompanied by tensions within them, especially those between Cameron and the Tory right, which he sought to placate in the recent cabinet reshuffle.

The weakness of the coalition—the deep-rooted economic problems it faces, its political tensions, along with its diminishing support—is crucial to our perspective. We want to drive through the working class the argument that the coalition is weak and therefore we can win over austerity. As one speaker put it at the recent TUC conference, while arguing a general strike, "There are real cracks in the coalition. I think we should stick the boot in and finish them off."

November to spring

Will the class struggle break through in this period? This question begs another: how can workers regain their confidence and rebuild the organisation they need within the workplace?

The problem would be resolved if there were a confident rank and file movement, composed of ordinary workers, union reps and shop stewards. The price of not having such a movement is increased dependence on the trade union bureaucracy, a layer within the unions which exists in order to negotiate the terms of exploitation of workers. The union leaders' inbuilt tendency to compromise is, for many of them, reinforced by their links to, and reliance on, the Labour Party.

The union bureaucracy is not simply a reactionary force. It also has an interest in ensuring the unions retain members and sufficient strength to ensure its continued influence. This means that the bureaucracy is susceptible to pressure from below and that it can sometimes initiate and lead struggles. Revolutionary socialists will sometimes be with and sometimes be against the union bureaucracy. The point is that the bureaucracy cannot be relied on to *consistently* lead a class fight. That is the basic reason why a rank and file movement is required to push the bureaucracy forwards, to hold it to account and, if necessary, to move independently of it.

However, a rank and file *movement* can only be built through sustained struggle. It is, above all else, struggle that gives workers confidence and strengthens workplace organisation.

Both sides of the union bureaucracy have

been evident over the past 12 months.

First, anyone who believed mass strikes were impossible in Britain without first building a rank and file movement was proved wrong. The 30 November 2011 strike, involving up to 2.5 million workers, was the largest since 1926. True, the strike, like many in recent years, was focused on the public sector. But it is not surprising that mass bureaucratic strikes should begin in the areas of the economy where union organisation remains most intact and where workers face a single employer—the government. We want the strike movement to take root across the whole working class, but an effective and powerful movement by public sector unions can aid this development, especially if workers win.

But the second lesson of 30 November was that the union leaders were able to close down the strikes. Key leaders signed an outline deal over Christmas 2011 and then wore down resistance over the next nine months. This culminated in the vote this summer by local government workers in Unison, Unite, GMB and Ucuatt to accept a shoddy deal on pensions. Acceptance was grudging. Faced with a situation in which workers were told that the offer was the best that could be achieved, and in the absence of a powerful counterweight at the base of the unions or the prospect of more action, members reluctantly voted it through. In the NHS workers rejected the deal, but were told their vote was not strong enough!

The leaders of the other unions also tried to limit strikes—the teachers' NUT called off national action in the spring and then refused it again in June. The civil service workers' PCS refused to strike in March, while Sally Hunt, leader of the lecturers' UCU, sought to undermine action in the colleges. In this situation we both criticised the decisions of the union leaders and used whatever strength we had in the unions to stop a complete rout, helping to ensure, for example, that the UCU strike went ahead in May. There is no question that this was a difficult period, both because it was a setback for the movement and because it involved the SWP having to break sharply over these issues with left wing officials who we had previously been working with. The result was to demoralise some union activists.

However, it is important not to generalise too much from the impact on activists who feel the betrayal of the union leaders most keenly. In addition, the betrayals have helped to harden up and politicise a layer of activists who are more likely to accept our position on the union struggle.

There will continue to be important battles such as the strikes by London bus workers, the Essex firefighters, the Sheffield recycling workers and Remploy workers nationally. But what are the prospects for a resumption of the struggle on a broad scale?

Prospects for a hot autumn

The union bureaucracy faces two pressures to act. The constant attacks by the coalition—so far, only some 20 percent of the proposed cuts have been implemented—mean there is little space for cosy compromise. At the same time there is pressure from below, from union members furious at the assault on their jobs, services and living standards, and from activists who have been through the steep learning curve of the past 18 months and know that it is fatal to leave everything to the union leaders.

Political issues too can raise the level of bitterness against the ruling class, whether it is the issue of bankers' corruption, or the exposure of how our rulers act from the News International scandals to the Hillsborough revelations, or the attacks on the NHS and other public services.

The TUC conference in early September reflected these pressures. As well as voting for coordinated strikes, delegates backed by four to one a motion to "consider the practicalities of a general strike". This historic vote now needs to be turned into reality. Unions such as Unison, Unite and the GMB are talking of strikes over pay—but not until well into next spring! We have to crank up the pressure for action.

A key test will be the TUC and STUC demonstrations set for 20 October in London and Glasgow.

These are of the utmost importance—we must make them a priority in every area in which the SWP has a presence. We need to be at the centre of building as big and angry a protest as possible, while simultaneously arguing about what must follow: mass action and a general strike. The 20 October protests are a chance to rage against the coalition, but also a way to build the confidence of our own side and pressure on the union leaders. Over the summer the SWP has helped to initiate cross-union reps' meetings to prepare for the protest, leafleted workplaces and set up rallies. We must continue such activity.

The potential to secure mass action after 20 October—and the problems in doing so—are shown by the vote in the teachers' NUT union in early September to strike alongside the NASUWT. Some 82 percent backed the action on a 27 percent turnout, despite the fact that the ballot was mostly conducted during the long summer vacation. If the teachers strike, other unions (PCS, UCU, etc) have policy to come out too. But despite earlier pledges, the NUT leaders, who are on the left, announced only non-strike action after the ballot. They indicate there might be a national strike in the future, but they will face intense pressure from NASUWT leaders not to go ahead with it. Equally, no other union has yet "named the day" for action.

We have to work with the left (and not so left) union leaders when they lead a fight, but maintain our political independence and not draw back from necessary criti-

cism. If we fail in this, we will leave our members and supporters disarmed when struggle is choked off.

We have to seize upon any official opportunities presented to us, without for a moment neglecting to argue about how the movement can win. Alongside this, we have to take up any prospect of local or sectional action that can help to reinvigorate and build union strength. The construction workers' victory earlier this year was an excellent example of utilising official and unofficial protests, pickets and walkouts to humble a powerful multinational.

Unite the Resistance

The SWP is too small on its own to shape the direction of class struggle nationally. We want to work with others who broadly agree with us, and the organisational expression of this approach to the union struggle is Unite the Resistance (UtR). While this organisation is open to all those fighting against austerity, and welcomes campaigns outside the unions, its central focus is on working class activity.

Before we look at UtR, it is worth noting that there are other approaches being attempted in this field. For instance, the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) declares that it has been "building the rank and file since 2006" and aims to do so "from the bottom-up". This involves the ritual denunciation of union leaders, except those who happen to be involved in the project, and of Labourism generally. Another quite prominent campaign is the Coalition of Resistance, which has sought to construct an anti-austerity campaign heavily modelled on the Stop the War Coalition as it existed from 2001 to 2004. This movement falls into the opposite trap to NSSN, making itself the prisoner of sections of the union bureaucracy. It also involves making a fetish of a certain model of united front, in this case StW. Yet the key difference between a united front such as Stop the War and a movement directed as a lever to elevate class struggle in the workplace is that the latter must necessarily confront the tension between union bureaucracy and the rank and file.

UtR is a united front, critically one that involves working with sections of the union bureaucracy, specifically those sections prepared to countenance strike action. While many people accept this idea *in principle*, it is far harder to realise *in practice*, because it involves working with people who may betray us, and sometimes *have* in the past drawn back from struggle. It means forming relationships with vacillating elements. It means avoiding an ultimatum approach based on denunciation.

If these are the challenges involved in UtR, what are the benefits? First, it allows us to create a movement of far greater size, breadth and weight within the working class than we would otherwise be able to. Precisely because the rank and file lacks confidence, the presence of sections of the left bureaucracy increases the potential scale

of this organisation. And numbers matter. While the SWP cannot aspire to be the decisive influence on the union movement at this stage, we want to maximise our leverage. Through UtR we can build wide networks of activists in every area around us. At every protest or picket line we must have a sign-up sheet for people to get involved in UtR. Second, it allows us to apply pressure more effectively on the vacillating elements in the bureaucracy. Third, it is a forum in which we can argue for the tactics required for the movement to win. Fourth, it creates a space where the elements of a rank and file movement can begin to assemble.

But if we are serious about developing a tension between rank and file and the union bureaucracy within UtR, it means winning far more support for the UtR project.

The national conference of UtR on 17 November should be another key date in everyone's diary. We need to secure the maximum backing from trade unions. The conference last year, over a thousand-strong, won support from 160 union branches, campaigns and other organisations. We want significantly more backing for the November 2012 conference. And we want delegations of workers from unions and workplaces to attend, along with student activists, anti-cuts campaigners, disability activists, campaigners against workfare and benefit cuts, health campaigners and pensioners.

Support for the conference and delegations to it can form the basis for regional UtR organisation, which we want to begin building through the autumn and beyond. These local versions of UtR must exhibit the same breadth, the same distinctive approach to the union bureaucracy, as the organisation does nationally; they cannot be reduced back down to the SWP and our friends. We want UtR to be the vehicle for providing solidarity with strikes and struggles taking place in the working class. If a group of workers takes action, UtR should try to initiate solidarity for them. Such solidarity should not be confined to Britain. Quite rightly many people now understand the close connections between our battles and those in Spain, Greece and Italy—as well as Egypt and South Africa. UtR should where possible build this solidarity as well, as it did around the Spanish miners.

The left response

At first glance, Britain's political situation might appear to mark it out as an exception to the trend of reviving left-wing radicalism across Europe. Despite extremely favourable circumstances, the Labour Party is underperforming, primarily because of the failure of Ed Miliband and his front bench to connect to the bitterness over austerity. Miliband and Ed Balls managed to enrage delegates at the TUC by their support for Tory policies of pay freezes and (slightly slower) cuts.

Nonetheless, Labour remains the major British reformist party and it will, despite

itself, be the main beneficiary of discontent in the short term. May's local elections showed a continuation of the revival in Labour's fortunes, even in Scotland where some commentators had expected the party to be routed by the Scottish Nationalists. Labour currently has a 10 percent lead in the polls, which helps explain why there has been no sign of a leadership challenge to Miliband.

Electoral forces to the left of Labour are not entirely absent in Britain. Respect MP George Galloway's breakthrough in Bradford was the high point in recent months. It showed that opposition to austerity, mobilised on an openly "old Labour" platform, could catch a popular mood. Rightly, we welcomed the victory and used the momentum it created to promote our candidates in the local elections, notably Michael Lavalette who was re-elected as a socialist councillor in Preston.

However, the high of Galloway's breakthrough was quickly followed by the low of his appalling comments on rape in the context of the Julian Assange case, which damaged both the struggle against women's oppression and the left generally. Not for the first time, this shows one of the problems for projects to the left of Labour in Britain today. The price paid for a narrow social base for these movements is a dependence on individuals. This makes the projects unstable and can make it hard for them to reach beyond the areas in which they achieve their initial breakthrough.

We remain part of the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) which rests on our forces, the Socialist Party, the RMT union, some independent leftists and some figures from other left unions. Our participation reflects our commitment to engage in electoral work. Within TUSC, we have sought to concentrate on a small number of targeted campaigns, rather than following a scattergun approach that presumes that we can best seek to fill the space to Labour's left by simply hoisting our flag. We have also argued for the need to reach out to other forces on the left where we can. In addition, if we are to broaden out these projects, we must continue to argue for trade union backing for candidates who oppose austerity. The decision by the PCS union's members (by 79 percent in a ballot) to support the idea of the union running its own anti-cuts candidates or backing existing ones is a big step forward. We should argue for a similar position in unions such as the NUT.

The present weakness of the electoral forces to the left of Labour should not lead to us discount future possibilities. The question of working class political representation is far from solved. We live in volatile times where parties such as Greece's Pasok can see its support melt away almost overnight. We should not think Britain is wholly immune to such trends although elections are not at the moment at the centre of the SWP's work.

Anti-systemic feelings

Although the anger from below is poorly expressed through official politics, the long-term revival in radicalisation that began in the late 1990s has continued. The degree of alienation from the establishment, and the questioning or rejection of the system, takes many forms. Judged by the 2010 student movement that rampaged through Milbank and led to a wave of struggle by school, college and university students; the riots of last summer; the Occupy movement; etc—Britain fits into the pattern of radicalisation across Europe.

Many of these movements are episodic explosions of rage that "rise like a rocket and fall like a stick". That makes it all the more important that we respond to them rapidly, and seek to influence and shape them.

Even when these movements are not in evidence, the sentiments that inform them remain. That leads to two important consequences. The first follows from the fact that the anti-systemic mood is especially concentrated among young people—hardly surprising when we consider that 18 year old students arriving at university this year have known nothing but economic crisis since they became teenagers. This means that student work cannot be an optional extra. In every town or city with a university campus, we must try to build a presence. No branch or district can neglect student work. We need a good presence at freshers' fairs, systematic follow up, weekly SWSS meetings and to ensure our students are at the centre of the ideological debates. We also need to build for the 21 November national education demo as well as local actions.

The second consequence is that the SWP has to engage in the debates relevant to these movements, which have increasingly moved onto terrain favourable to us: reform or revolution, the nature of the crisis, the alternatives to capitalism, etc.

More generally, the crisis intensifies every political issue, and tests every political force. Questions such as the Syrian revolution, the revenge against Assange and the allegations of rape, the Marikana massacre and the role of the trade union bureaucracy require a clear political lead. In addition in our publications and our meetings we need to link the particular issues to a general critique of capitalism and a credible idea of a socialist alternative.

Unite Against Fascism

Britain is certainly not immune from political polarisation to the right. At its high point in 2009 the British National Party (BNP) held 57 council seats across the country and won two seats in the European Parliament. But nor is the right's rise irresistible. Today the BNP has lost all but three of its councillors. The mainstream coverage has emphasised the infighting and chaos within the BNP itself, but this ignores the campaigning work

of Unite Against Fascism (UAF). Fascist groups always contain tensions within them, especially between those elements that want to push for greater respectability to broaden the base of the organisation through elections and those that want to push for violent confrontation on the streets. When and to what extent this leads to splits in their organisation depends to a great degree on them being challenged by anti-fascists, and by efforts of groups such as UAF to drive a wedge between the hardened Nazis at the core and their softer support. Mass leafleting of constituencies, the events organised by Love Music Hate Racism, the support won in the unions for opposition to the BNP, and so on, all played a part.

The main efforts of UAF over the past two years have been directed against the English Defence League (EDL) and their counterparts in Scotland and Wales, which tapped into racism and Islamophobia, and the bitterness caused by the crisis, emerging within just months and capable, at their high point, of mobilising thousands of fascists, racists and gangs of violent football hooligans on the streets.

Again, UAF was critical in breaking their momentum. Our approach involved trying to hold together and periodically rebuild broad anti-fascist coalitions, while also being prepared to confront the EDL on the streets, rather than relying on state bans to block them. In a whole series of recent mobilisations, some on more favourable ground than others, UAF was able to build protests that outnumbered the EDL. The demonstration in Walthamstow, east London, at the start of September was a pivotal moment. The 4,000-strong UAF mobilisation, which humiliated the 200 EDL members present on the day, reflected the work of comrades on the ground over several years, but it also showed the success of our tactics. Such confrontations have demoralised and divided the EDL.

However, these forces are not finished. The EDL and BNP will seek to rebuild, and fascism can revive in new forms, especially in the context of state-sanctioned racism and crisis. We need to capitalise on our success by building broad UAF groups in every area of the country.

United front work

UAF is a particularly important instance of a united front. Such an organisation is characterised by an agreement between revolutionaries and reformists for common action without the revolutionaries having to sacrifice their independence.

The united front is necessitated by the hold of reformism over workers. As Trotsky put it: "If we were able simply to unite the working masses around our own banner or around our practical immediate slogans, and skip over reformist organisations... that would of course be the best thing in the world. But then the question of the united front would not exist in its present form."

The question arises from this, that certain very important sections of the working class belong to reformist organisations or support them. Their present experience is still insufficient to enable them to break with the reformist organisations and join us.”

It is through common struggles that revolutionaries prove the superiority of their arguments, their tactics and their approach. To secure unified struggles, it is necessary for revolutionaries to approach not just workers with reformist ideas, but also their organisations, their leaders, who those workers still look to. At the very least it will expose the reformist leaders if they refuse unity—provided the approach is credible in the eyes of workers. In practice a credible approach, given the limited size and social weight of the SWP, means seeking to work with left-wing sections of the Labour party, unions and other organisations. Finally, as Trotsky pointed out, “Any sort of organisational agreement which restricts our freedom of criticism and agitation is absolutely unacceptable to us. We participate in a united front but do not for a single moment become dissolved in it.”

But this general approach still leaves an enormous degree of flexibility in the form taken by united fronts. Will it be a national campaign or local? What forces can we approach over a particular issue? How will it be organised? Will it take the form of a campaign that issues its own materials and has its own committee? What type of activity will it undertake? And so on.

Alongside UtR, UAF and StW, which we have already mentioned, we have done important work in Defend the Right to Protest, which has proved capable of mobilising broad layers against the crackdown on our rights as well as generating support for justice campaigns and prisoners’ support.

We will also continue to participate in organisations such as Defend Council Housing, the Education Activists Network, Right to Work (specifically over issues such as workfare), Disabled People Against Cuts and the Campaign against Climate Change. In addition we will need to involve ourselves in a range of anti-cuts and anti-austerity campaigns and organisations in localities.

The party

The challenges we have set out in this document place a huge onus upon party organisation. We cannot achieve this without also building and continuing to renew the SWP.

The picture here is generally positive. The SWP has played a prominent role in the most important expressions of resistance to the coalition government. We have a network of activists and trade unionists who have won respect in the wider labour movement. Not only that, but in a number of areas we have drawn in a new layer of party activists, many of them young members. The level of debate and discussion in the party has also increased, reflecting both the integration of

new forces within it and the complexities of the situation we find ourselves in.

We have continued to strengthen many of the basic units of our organisation—branches, districts, student groups, union fractions and so on. A further positive sign is the success of the national events that we organise, notably the Marxism 2012 festival, the largest such event since the 1990s.

The *Socialist Worker* redesign has been widely welcomed, bringing a fresh and direct feel to the paper. SW is not only the best-looking paper on the left; we believe it consistently carries the best political analysis. It is now easier to read and more clearly presents workers’ and campaigners’ voices. But, crucially, it still has plenty of space for the longer theoretical and historical articles which are essential. The coverage of the Hillsborough revelations is just one example of what a good socialist paper can do.

We have to make sure that every member has a periphery of paper readers around them in their place of work or study, alongside our public sales of the paper and sales outside workplaces. The networks of readers we create will be crucial to carrying our arguments through the working class movement in the period ahead.

The number of visitors to the website, www.socialistworker.co.uk, continues to increase. Some examples of popular articles include the initial analysis of the Marikana massacre (14,000 reads in a week) and the first day of the revelations about Hillsborough, News International and a possible break-in, which was read by 5,000 people in a day and was picked up by Liverpool football supporters’ sites.

The website will be further developed. A new site is due to go live in early November, which will open the way for even more powerful web coverage.

Despite the considerable strengths of the party—our events, our publications and our organisation—there remains considerable unevenness.

We have to ensure that every unit of the party is attempting to engage members in tactical discussions. Our branch meetings, public meetings and SWSS meetings need to be places we can bring contacts for serious debates on questions thrown up by the movement and on more general political topics. They have to use the talents and enthusiasm of every member, from the most experienced to the freshest.

Above all, we have to grow in size and influence. That means taking the question of consistent sales of *Socialist Worker*—to contacts and on public and workplace sales—and recruitment to the party seriously. It also means ensuring that new members are given responsibility and that we try to train them both in the struggle and in the basic ideas of Marxism, through encouraging reading of books and party publications, through organising educational meetings and through informal discussion.

The challenges for the party in the coming period are big. We need a bigger party if

we are to rise to them. At present our recruitment is too low. Just as we seek to make every member a leader inside the working class, so we also want them to be recruiters.

Our immediate aims are: to build for the 20 October demos, press for mass strikes and a general strike, strengthen UtR, and to build among students and for the 21 November national demo. We need to build the SWP and ensure it remains at the centre of this fightback in order to strengthen those struggles and to create a more powerful revolutionary socialist force rooted in the working class.

Central Committee

This is the CC’s general perspective for the conference. As well as the specific documents on Racism and Fascism and the Syrian Revolution in this bulletin, future bulletins will feature CC documents on Building the party and Socialist Worker; Industrial perspectives; Unite the Resistance; Defend the Right to Protest; Electoral strategy; LGBT liberation; The fight for women’s liberation today; Students; International Report and Finance.

Central Committee

FIGHTING RACISM AND FASCISM

The Tories, racism and resistance

1. Whilst the economic crisis and the fight against austerity are the central questions facing the SWP, the struggle against fascism and anti-racism are very important areas of our work.

2. Institutional racism continues to scar British society.

· The report by Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System (2012), found that ethnic minority defendants received longer sentences in every offence group. In cases of violent disorder and sexual assault, the sentences ethnic minorities received were 25% longer than their white counterparts.

· According to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (June 2012), if you are a black person, you are at least six times as likely to be stopped and searched by the police in England and Wales as a white person. If you are Asian, you are around twice as likely to be stopped and searched as a white person.

· The economic crisis and the Tories austerity drive are hitting the working class hard and black and Asian people even harder. The Office for National Statistics figures show that more than half of all

black men aged 16 -24 are unemployed, the figure for white males aged 16 – 24 is 24%.

3. Cameron's speech in Munich attacking multiculturalism and blaming Muslims for not integrating into the "British way of life" in February 2011 represented a step change in state racism. Since Munich he has made three more keynote speeches along similar lines. In order to deflect anger away from their failure to deal with the economic crisis and in order to justify the so-called "war on terror" the Tories are shamelessly playing the race card.

· Cameron's attacks are part of a wider offensive by Europe's rulers. Germany's Andrea Merkel, the French ex-president Nicholas Sarkozy and Greece's leaders have all made similar speeches. In Greece there are repeated round-ups and raids against immigrants. In France and Hungary in particular there are attacks on, and deportations of, Roma.

· Despite the Stephen Lawrence inquiry, sections of the state – the police, judges and immigration services – continue to play their part in enforcing racist policies and implementing racist and discriminatory practices. The hatred towards the police is so deep because they are seen by many black, Asian and white working class youth as the front line of this assault.

· The decision of the UK Border Agency (UKBA) and government to revoke London Metropolitan University's licence to teach 3,000 international non-EU students shows how vicious the government is, but is also shows the real contradiction it faces. On the one hand it wants to act tough and clamp down on migrants coming to Britain and on the other Britain's bosses want cheap labour and colleges and university managers desperately need the money raised by foreign students' fees. It's very encouraging that an excellent campaign won an interim victory over this issue.

· This climate of racism towards Muslims and migrants is constantly being whipped up by the media.

4. Both in government and in opposition the Labour has failed to make a stand over racism. It was Blair who launched the "war on terror". It was Gordon Brown, who pushed the slogan "British Jobs for British Workers". And Tottenham's Labour MP David Lammy condemned last year's rioters, a far cry from his predecessor Bernie Grant who after the 1985 Broadwater Farm riots said the "police got a good hiding".

· It is however vital that we work with any Labour MP/activist who wants to oppose racism and fascism. We must not automatically write off those on the right of the party. For example ex Labour ministers Peter Hain and Margaret Hodge have both played an important role in the campaign against the fascist British National Party. Likewise Labour MP and Blairite Stella Creasy was part of the campaign to stop the

EDL in Walthamstow.

5. The rise in unemployment, poverty and the increasing levels of state repression is creating real anger in British society. This anger exploded on our streets during last summer's riots.

· The SWP was right to defend the rioters and we were right to oppose their demonisation in the press and the vicious prison sentences many received. We must continue to defend those arrested and support those who currently languish in jail.

6. Resistance to racism also takes other forms. There are a number of justice campaigns, protests against discrimination and police brutality. Defend the Right to Protests has and will continue to pull these campaigns together. Of course the biggest expression of this anger against racism has been the marches against the Nazi English Defence League.

The rise of the far right across Europe

1. The key beneficiary of this rise in state racism has been the far right and fascist groups that are mushrooming across Europe. For example:

· The Greek Nazi party, Golden Dawn gained over 7 percent of the vote and now has 18 MPs.

· In the 2012 French Presidential elections, the Front National's presidential candidate, Marine Le Pen came third with 18 percent of the vote and almost 6.5 million votes – the best showing ever for the FN.

· Hungary's Nazi Jobbik party is now the third biggest party in the country with 47 MPs. Its paramilitary wing Magyar Garda has been involved in a string of murderous attacks on the Roma population.

· In 2010 the Euro Fascist Swedish Democrats crossed the 4 percent threshold for the first time and now have 20 MPs. Despite his recent electoral set back Geert Wilders' PVV still has 15 MPs in the Dutch parliament.

2. The growth of the European far right is taking three forms (these are only broad definitions, clearly parties like Jobbik cross these boundaries).

· **Populist far right:** Parties like UKIP, PVV and pressure groups like the Tea Party in the US are using Islamophobia and other forms of racism to gain electoral support.

· **Euro Fascism:** Was developed by the French FN in the 1980s and has been adopted by other fascist organisations like the Swedish Democrats and British National Party. No longer would the FN openly proclaim their dedication to Hitler and genocidal racism. Instead they would present themselves as nationalists, concerned about immigration and multiculturalism, in order to embed themselves within the political system. This did

not mean dropping fascism, but hiding it. Le Pen's Front National still has an army of thugs it uses to spread race hatred and terror.

· **Street fighting organisations:** In the last few years we have seen the rise of Nazi street fighting organisations like the EDL and ultra violent and virulently racist Eastern European gangs. The logic of this ultra violent movement was the murderous rampage carried out by Anders Breivik in Norway and Wade Michael Page's shooting spree in a Sikh temple in Wisconsin.

· It is important to recognise that there are serious attempts by the far right to come together and draw lessons from each other and that the organisational forms they take are not fixed.

3. The rise of the far right across Europe is due to a number of factors, the key ones are the economic crisis and the legitimisation of racist ideas. The organisational form fascism is developing in each country is a product of a myriad of local and historical factors.

For instance the rise of the ultra violent gangs in Eastern Europe can be located in the double whammy - the failure of both the Communist (State Capitalist) system and later the failure of market capitalism to solve the economic crisis. This alienation and deep political bitterness has opened up a space for ultra violent groups to grow.

4. Islamophobia has acted as the main recruiting and mobilising tool for the far right in Northern Europe, but in southern and Eastern Europe it has taken the form of anti-Roma and anti-migrant racism.

As new forms of racism develop, older more traditional forms resurface. A recent BBC documentary showed the frightening rise of anti-semitism in Poland. Again in English football we have seen a number of cases of anti-black racist abuse carried out by players.

5. One problem has been the failure of the left in many countries to build anti-fascist movement capable of countering the rise of the far right.

· The opposition to the growth of the far right in many European countries like Russia, Ukraine and Latvia is under the control of the old Stalinist organisations who have no influence and are discredited.

· In countries like France and Belgium much of the left just ignore the fascists in the hope that they will go away. Even more seriously, large sections accept some Islamophobic ideas.

· Finally some good news: in Spain and Greece we are seeing the emergence of anti-fascist organisations based on the UAF model. And because of the success of UAF we are being asked to attend meetings of key working class organisations in Norway, Italy, Denmark and Germany to discuss how to combat the rise of the Nazis.

The rise and fall of the BNP

1. Three years ago the British National Party was riding the crest of the wave.

- The BNP made its first major electoral breakthrough when it won three council seats in Burnley in 2002. By 2009 the Nazis had two MEPs, one member of the Greater London Assembly, close to 60 councillors and a significant political base in Barking and Stoke.

- Its development was markedly different from previous fascist reincarnations. Mosley's fascist BUF movement of the 1930s and the National Front in the 1970s, concentrated on building a street movement and not on the ballot box. The BNP under Nick Griffin moved away from this model and adopted the Euro Nazi strategy. This worked so long as the BNP made electoral gains, but as soon as it suffered electoral set backs the divisions between the street fighters and the "electoralists" opened up.

- The BNP now finds itself in terminal decline and is riddled with splits and factions. The crisis began in 2010 when they lost 26 council seats and were wiped out in Barking and Dagenham, were they lost all 12 seats. The next year they lost 11 of the 13 council seats they defended including all five they held in Stoke-on-Trent. Finally this year they lost their seat on the GLA.

- Next year the BNP will be campaigning hard to hold onto its two MEPs in Yorkshire and Lancashire. We are organising a major campaign to beat them.

The English Defence League

1. The English Defence League was launched at the height of the BNP's success in June 2009. Welsh and Scottish Defence Leagues quickly followed. Despite major setbacks in Birmingham and Harrow its rise was rapid and shocking.

Within a year it was able to put 2 -4000 supporters onto the streets in Stoke (January 2010), Bolton (March 2010), Dudley (April 2010) and Bradford in (August 2010). Over the last three years the EDL has organised 92 major protests and countless local/flash protests.

2. The EDL's foot soldiers are drawn from a number of football hooligan firms, although many are drawn to the EDL by the promise of violence, the political cement that holds them together is anti-Muslim racism - Islamophobia. The economic crisis only adds to the bitterness its members feel. The EDL leadership have all been members of other Nazi organisations.

- Over the past two years the EDL and its splinter groups have widened their list of enemies - its members have attacked trade union demonstrations, picket lines, radical bookshops and socialist meetings. They also threatened to attack the Occupy Movement camp at St Paul's and the student protests in 2010.

- It has now developed into a fully fledged fascist movement

3. We have seen ultra violent movements develop like this in the past - Mussolini's "Squadristo" movement and Hitler's "Brownshirts".

They always pose a major threat to socialist organisation and migrant communities. These movements grow rapidly and their success depends on their ability to keep on growing and give their activists a "buzz". But they have their weaknesses. Because they are based on the idea of controlling the streets, if they suffer any setbacks or are kept in check or defeated they can quickly decline and splits and breakaways develop.

4. The police's policy towards the EDL could be at best described as ambiguous - on many protests it has treated the EDL as just a hooligan problem and has facilitated their protests providing protection, pubs and transport for them. At their worst the police have attacked and kettled our protests (Bolton was when this strategy reached its height).

- Up until Tower Hamlets (September 2011), our counter-marches did not deliver a knock out blow. They did however contain the EDL and the war of attrition saw the numbers attending on the EDL's side fall.

5. The EDL rapid rise was first stalled in Tower Hamlets last year and it was beaten back in Walthamstow in September. This had very little to do with the EDL's own weaknesses but instead had everything to do with the campaign UAF organised to defeat it.

Unite Against Fascism

1. We have to vigorously challenge the argument, which claims that Britain is the exception to the rule and fascism can never take hold here. The objective conditions for the growth of the far right in Britain are similar to many European countries.

Of course the economic crisis is not as severe as it is in Greece, but unemployment levels and migration levels are similar to many other European countries. The objective conditions are similar but there is one subjective factor that has played a major part in defeating the BNP and weakening the EDL is Unite Against Fascism.

2. UAF was launched in 2003. It was modelled on the spirit of Trotsky's United Front. It is a broad based organisation that unites trade unions, reformist organisations and revolutionaries around a single issue - opposition to fascism. The UAF national committee is elected every year. The present committee is:

Honorary president - Doreen Lawrence
 Chair - Steve Hart, political officer, Unite
 Vice chair - Christine Blower, general secretary, NUT
 Vice chair - Hugh Lanning, deputy general secretary, PCS

Vice chair - Azad Ali (IFE)

Vice chair - Jennifer Moses, national official for equality and training, NASUWT

Treasurer - Tony Kearns, deputy general secretary, CWU

Joint secretary - Weyman Bennett

Joint secretary - Sabby Dhalu

Assistant secretary - Martin Smith

Assistant secretary - Jude Woodward

Parliamentary officer - Peter Hain MP

European officer - Claude Moraes MEP and Glyn Ford

3. Because the BNP was no longer trying to take control of the streets but were instead concentrating on the ballot box, UAF had to develop a new strategy to defeat them.

On a national level UAF organised a major 'don't vote Nazi' campaigns and LMHR organised large events to win over young people to the anti-fascist message. But the other key component to our success were the local groups who tirelessly knocked on doors, spoke at small meetings and undermined the Nazis' votes. This was slow, meticulous and patient work which finally undermined the BNP's electoral base and just as important persuaded people fed up with the mainstream political parties to go out and vote against the Nazis.

4. The BNP are very much down but not out. We mustn't be complacent the scale of the economic crisis, the rise in racism and the mainstream parties disconnect with the electorate means that they believe they can make a comeback in one guise or another.

5. Just stopping the Nazis is not enough. Fascism thrives on despair, socialists have to give people hope and confidence.

That's why it is vital we are involved in campaigns to defend schools, hospitals and council housing, we support strikes and other forms of resistance against the cuts and we also oppose the racism of the state. Lastly and most importantly we have to campaign for a socialist alternative to capitalism.

6. With the rise of the EDL, UAF once again had to change and develop new tactics. Over the past 15 months we have organised a number of successful protests against the EDL - Plymouth, Portsmouth, Cambridge, Luton, Sunderland, Dundee, Brighton, Bristol etc. In all those cases we outnumbered the EDL. Importantly in Tower Hamlets (September 2011) and Walthamstow (September 2012) not only did we out mobilise them, we stopped them from marching.

- Its defeat in Walthamstow has left the EDL weak and divided. According to an internal EDL report, there are now only 21 functioning groups, a number of key EDL members have resigned in the wake of the Walthamstow debacle and in a desperate gamble the EDL leadership has called another national demonstration in Walthamstow on 27 October.

6. It is vital we draw the correct lessons from the Walthamstow protest.

- Mass mobilisations are the key to defeating the EDL.

- This was made possible in Walthamstow because we had a strong well rooted UAF group which was supported by the local trade union movement, activists in the Labour Party and faith groups, in particular the mosques.

- It was important we politically challenged some of the arguments some groups raised. For example the Socialist Party wanted to exclude Labour councillors and the local MP from our platforms because they supported the cuts. Comrades were clear, whilst we oppose the cuts we are prepared to work with anyone in the Labour Party who wishes to oppose fascism.

- Many people who oppose the EDL support the call for them to be banned. It is vital we do not treat them as the enemy. We have to patiently explain that bans do not stop the EDL from holding static protests and that you can't rely on the state to stop racism and fascism. At a minimum we have to win the position that those who call for a ban should not use it as an excuse to demobilise the counter EDL protest and they should at the same time build our protest.

Where next for UAF?

1. Today Unite Against Fascism is the only national anti-fascist campaign. Searchlight and Hope not Hate split earlier this year. Hope not Hate has been totally discredited because of its connections with right wing strands in Labour, its anti-strike stance and its campaign to treat the EDL and "radical" Islamic groups as an equal danger.

Searchlight is in the process of working constructively with UAF and has moved away from organising a movement against the far right and has reverted back to being a magazine that exposes them.

2. The strength of UAF has been the combination of a national organisation linked to local UAF groups. Without well rooted and long standing groups in places like Waltham Forest, Bristol, Cambridge, Stoke etc we would not have beaten back the BNP or EDL.

It is now a priority that every branch/district/college launches/builds a local well rooted UAF group. The basic requirements are as follows.

- A local steering committee that involves local trade unionists, Green/Labour Party representatives/faith groups and other activists.

- If there is a low level of fascist activity it should organise occasional public meetings / events. For example - In defence of Multiculturalism, Holocaust Memorial Day an LMHR gig etc.

- This network can then be the backbone of a campaigning group when the EDL/BNP comes to town.

- Whilst this is a national priority - this

is an especially urgent task in the NW and Yorkshire where both the EDL and the BNP are trying to regroup.

- Following the success of the "We are Tower Hamlets" campaign, some local UAF groups have re-launched themselves as "We are" when the EDL have announced they are going to march in their area.

This is a mistake. The "We are" model worked in Tower Hamlets because it enabled us to overcome some local political problems we faced. But it does not always work. In Walthamstow, it enabled sectarians to try and change the nature of the campaign. Local groups should not set up "We are" campaigns without first running it by the UAF office.

3. It is no secret UAF runs on a shoe-string budget. If we are going to expand its operation then we are going to have to do the following:

a) Urge every member to take out a monthly Direct Debit to UAF.

b) Comrades should be encouraged to get their union branches to affiliate/donate to UAF and sign up workmates.

Love Music Hate Racism

Over the last ten years LMHR has put on enormous events across the country – a 100,000 strong carnival in Victoria Park (2008), 20,000 in Stoke (2009) and 8,000 in Barnsley (2010). In a number of areas we have successful LMHR groups who put on local gigs and festivals. Last year 180 events were put on around the country. It is a fact that the vast majority of these events are organised by non-members or bands that want to do their bit for the group.

The fact that over 680 people attended the recent LMHR 10th anniversary event is testimony to this. The event was young, mixed and most were non-members. The political debates were sophisticated and challenging.

LMHR has demonstrated time and time again that it can draw young people towards anti-fascist work and towards the party. We want to encourage young comrades and activists to set up their own local gigs/events.

Love Music Hate Homophobia

In the wake of Nick Griffin's homophobic rant on the BBC's Question Time and the EDL's outrageous attempts to claim it is LGBT 'friendly' a number of comrades and LGBT activists in the NUS launched Love Music Hate Homophobia. LMHH has along with the NUT put on floats at a number of Pride festivals giving the group a fantastic profile.

Whilst LMHH has had a political impact, it has not really shaped the cultural sphere in the way its sister organisation LMHR has. Over the coming year, as well as intervening around the pride events, we

are going to organise a number of local events/gigs around the country. Lastly we desperately need to find a young activist that knows the "LGBT music scene" and can help bring LGBT and LGBT friendly artists into LMHH.

Asylum and immigration work

For the past two years we have organised a fraction to coordinate our work on asylum and immigration across the party. At a national level it is necessary to arm activists by rebutting the myths about migration, which we will continue to do in our publications. There are also issues such as the threat to deport international students at London Metropolitan University where the party can play a central role, in that case helping to win a significant victory in the form of the amnesty granted to students.

Locally, branches have continued to take up anti-deportation campaigns. We cannot hope to fight every single case. There are better-resourced organisations far more suited to providing aid and legal advice to those seeking asylum. The role the SWP can play is to involve itself in cases where there is scope for high profile campaigns that highlight the general issues of asylum and immigration, and where we can win union support.

One important shift in our work is that we are arguing for a greater focus on the involvement of private companies such as Serco and G4S in the "asylum industry". In Glasgow where the awarding of the contract to house asylum seekers to Serco has led to attempts to drive through deportations of "failed" asylum seekers, we have led a significant campaign with broad support from the unions, including the STUC, and Scottish politicians. There is scope for such campaigns in South Yorkshire, Manchester and the West Midlands, where Serco or G4S have taken on contracts. This is one area where anger at the mistreatment of refugees can fuse together with broader disgust at these companies over their other activities and their support for government policies of privatisation and austerity.

The SWP's anti-racist work

1. SWP members have worked as part of or alongside other campaigns and trade unions to support and build a series of important justice campaigns around black deaths in custody including those for Smiley Culture, Sean Rigg, Kingsley Burrell and Christopher Alder. We also publicised and joined in campaigning around the shooting of black US teenager Trayvon Martin.

2. We have held a series of successful SWP public and branch meetings around Stephen Lawrence, racism in the police and the riots one year on. We have encouraged new speakers to do meetings on these and

other topics around racism and fascism.

3. We have started to develop a new layer of black and Asian leadership in the party with caucuses, a series of educationals for black and Asian members in London, and a black and Asian-led intervention at September's LMHR anniversary event. This work will be rolled out more widely with a national black and Asian members' day school in November.

4. Comrades have put together a reading list for those wanting to learn more or do meetings on racism and fascism. This includes scanning and posting online of *Race and Class* by Alex Callinicos and *Race, Resistance and Revolution* by Peter Alexander—two excellent books on racism and the revolutionary tradition that have been out of print for some time.

5. Bookmarks published the pamphlet *Black British Rebels* by Hassan Mahamdallie, which was launched at a very successful event at the bookshop.

6. Comrades are working on a new party book on racism and the revolutionary tradition.

Central Committee

SYRIA AND THE ARAB REVOLUTIONS

1. As the second anniversary of the eruption of the revolutions of North Africa and the Middle East approaches, the process of revolution is still unfolding.

Three dictators have gone but the revolutions that followed Tunisia and Egypt taken a very different form.

The regimes in Libya and Syria didn't crumble and had enough of a base, particularly in the military, to hold on.

In the case of Libya the intervention of Western powers was their first military foray into addressing the defeat of their two allies ousted from Tunisia and Egypt. They hypocritically took up the banner of "humanitarian intervention" once again to justify military action.

Yet when Libya's Gaddafi fell it had a contradictory effect. Clearly it was a product of Western military power. But many in the region saw it as a further victory for the revolutionary wave.

The West's hijacking of the revolution has had an impact on the political forces shaping the post Gaddafi society.

The revolutionary process was subverted by a combination of external intervention and the more conservative elements within the revolutionary movement domestically.

These two elements reinforced each other in Libya, especially with the failure of the revolution to rapidly topple Gaddafi.

The aspirations of many of those who took up the fight against his dictatorship are still unmet today. Instead of freedom, Western intervention has brought chaos, murder and death.

The Washington Post reports, "Just as the 'president of Afghanistan' is really the mayor of Kabul and the 'Iraqi government' long exercised sovereignty only in Baghdad's Green Zone – the central Libyan government exercises little authority outside of Tripoli." What happens in the future will be in part shaped by the struggles in the region and if the West's attempts to win hegemony over the wider uprisings succeeds.

2. The monumental struggle in Syria against the dictatorship of Bashar al Assad has resulted in 40,000 civilian casualties.

The revolution began as people taking part in peaceful marches calling on Assad to carry out reforms rather than demanding his downfall.

The regime's response has been brutal repression that hardened the movement against it. The call for the downfall of the Assad regime is now the demand of an opposition across the country. It is facing air attacks and a relentless military assault in working class districts.

The revolution has seen the rise of an opposition that includes local militias, some who fight under the banner of the "Free Syrian Army". This is made up of armed civilians who have organised to protect their families and communities from regime attacks. It also includes defectors from the Assad's troops who have refused to attack civilians and have joined the revolt. The defectors include officers, although some then have fled the country to Turkey and elsewhere.

The west has said it has helped arm some approved sections of the FSA through Turkey. It wants to control and shape which forces gain hegemony in the struggle by vetting who gets support. Yet despite all the talk of supporting the FSA most opposition fighters on the ground are opposing tanks and air attacks with the most basic of weapons.

The heart of the revolution has been the Local Coordinating Committees. They have largely maintained their independence and run day to day life in working class districts in opposition held districts across the country.

Reports tell of committees which organise security, medical supplies and treatment. Some organise food distribution and set local prices for grain, rice, heating oil and bread so the poorest people can survive. In one town the committee collects money from the better off homes to subsidise the most impoverished and put together a regular revolutionary paper.

Yet despite the resilience of the opposi-

tion against the onslaught of air and ground attacks the revolution has still not been able to bring down the regime.

This long battle has not been greeted with the same solidarity and celebration among the left in Britain, Tunisia and Egyptian revolutions.

Instead the left in Britain has been divided over this revolution.

Tunisia and Egypt were simple. A mass popular revolt brought down two Western backed dictators and all the left were united in celebration of those events.

Similarly as the revolutionary wave reached western allies like Bahrain the situation was clear.

But first in Libya and now in Syria revolution was challenging regimes which were seen as challenging imperialism - although each had collaborated with the West at critical points.

The regimes had often been seen as representing opposition to Western imperialism in the region. This meant that some on the left looked on the Syrian revolution as undermining the forces of anti-imperialism.

When the Western powers declared themselves on the side of the revolution and threatened intervention this view was reinforced.

3. So some on the left and in the anti-war movement now describe the Syrian revolt as an extension of imperial meddling in the country. Some do acknowledge its original roots in a popular movement for freedom and democracy, but assert that it has been co-opted by the west to bring down an anti-imperialist regime.

The opposition has been characterised as mere pawns in the hands of the US and Britain and its regional allies. But there is not one opposition. The elements of the opposition that have been willing to work with imperialism, like the Syrian National Council (SNC), are cited as representing the totality of the revolution and been given the highest profile in the media.

The SNC is made up of mainly exiles and was trumpeted by the west as the key opposition group to work with. But it did not have credibility on the ground in Syria, so the west has had to start talking to sections of the Free Syrian Army in order to try and shape events. But even this is contradictory as many of those officers and defectors they are trying to work with are not connected to those leading the battles on the ground within Syria.

The revolution is also portrayed as having turned into a sectarian civil war, of feuding religious factions rather than a class battle of the masses against a ruling elite. This is despite the fact that it has been the Assad regime that has ruthlessly used sectarianism to maintain its rule while progressive sections of the revolution have shown their determination to oppose sectarianism in any form.

4. The SWP has put forward an analysis that sees the Syrian revolution as being rooted in the same yearning for freedom and democracy that drove the Tunisian and Egyptian struggles.

People who have taken to the streets, defied snipers and tanks and self-organised in local committees are fighting to rid themselves of a dictatorship. They cannot be denounced as some form of counter-revolution.

We look to the revolt from below as offering the way out of poverty and oppression for the Syrian masses—and for creating the strongest anti-imperialist force in the region, the Arab masses.

Assad and his regime act in their own interests and these are in direct opposition to the mass of the population. They weren't even willing to give minor reforms when people first took to the streets.

Socialists see the key divide as being between the ruling class and the majority of the population. We don't believe that blocks of national states represent a progressive force that socialist should unconditionally support.

In this narrative the Russian state is the bulwark against imperialism and the Syrian people our class enemy.

5. But at the same time we have always insisted we are against Western imperialism and we have to fight to ensure our governments and their armies do not intervene either covertly or openly in the revolution.

The West wants to co-opt the revolutions and their only concern is trying to ensure whatever replaces Assad will be a regime willing to work with the west.

The US would like to see Assad go in an ordered retreat similar to the one engineered for President Saleh in Yemen. This would leave Syria's repressive state intact while installing a Western friendly alternative.

The US is terrified of a radical popular government that would present serious challenge to Israel.

The threat of imperialist intervention is real. But it is clear the US is not enthusiastic about launching another military mission when they are facing so many problems elsewhere internationally. It is also election year, and Barack Obama is loath to add another military venture that has no guarantee of success to his CV.

Our responsibility in Britain is to fight every attempt of our ruling class to wrap themselves in the false colours of liberation and democracy as a cover for their imperialist adventures.

We need to say loud and clear there is no such thing as "humanitarian" intervention.

But we also need to understand that the revolutions are not just a rerun of Afghanistan and Iraq.

The US is not in a position to simply dictate events. It is still the world's big-

gest superpower but it is not in a strong position. The revolutions caught it off guard. It didn't win in Iraq, and it is being driven out of Afghanistan.

There is a gap between what the west would like to do and what they can achieve. But the threat that western powers will succeed in their attempts to derail the popular revolt in their own interests continues.

We are part of the Stop the War Coalition and have mobilised within StW around the question of opposition to western intervention in Syria and more generally in the Middle East. The SWP has argued that the antiwar movement should unite around the slogans of "no to western intervention" and "self determination for the Syrian people".

Some in StW want it to take a position on the nature of the revolution and regime, but we have argued against this. To do so could break up the coalition over the issue. But within StW we also maintain our own independent view supporting the revolution against Assad.

6. But to see imperialist interference is not the only actor ignores the agency of millions of ordinary people in struggles to shape their own destiny. There is a new force in the region—the Arab masses coming onto the stage of history.

The west and their allies are terrified of that these struggles might produce genuine freedom and democracy, regimes that would reject both their local rulers and foreign powers.

This is a process, its trajectory is not predefined, it is not linear.

As in all revolutions what is happening in Syria represents a battle for the future of the revolution. Competing forces, internally and externally are fighting for political leadership.

What happens in Egypt is critical to this process. Egypt has the largest and most organised working class and the Egyptian revolution has the power to shape events across the region.

It is easy decades or even centuries after revolutions and uprising to see the outcomes as pre determined and conclusive. When witnessing them in our own lifetime revolutionaries must be aware of the complex process that a mass struggle represents. So we must beware of those on the left who want to insist on simplistic assertions about the nature of the struggle.

The revolutions have opened an historic opportunity to fundamentally challenge the role of both imperialism and capitalism in the region.

Central Committee

THREE SUBMISSIONS FROM ABERDEEN BRANCH

1) The SWP, trade unions and the rank and file

The Party has argued politically and consistently over the years for a rank and file strategy in the trade unions to building resistance. Events at the most recent STUC Conference in Inverness and UNISON Conference in Bournemouth evidenced how the 'dead hand' of the bureaucracy stifles debate and uses protocol to eradicate opposition to the right wing leadership in the unions.

Engels referred to the trade unions as 'schools of socialism'.

To that end, Comrades should continue the battle within the unions and argue for a socialist perspective at any given opportunity, even if that perspective is a minority view. The working class needs active, fighting, democratic, political unions involving the rank and file and majority of members against highly paid, unaccountable officials. We need strikes not incessant, pious 'rubber stamping'.

To that end Comrades, all SWP Branches should develop a rank and file strategy including regular, weekly industrial sales. We need to be where the working class are; in the workplaces!

2) The SWP, nationalism and the 'Scottish Question'

The Party has agreed a pro-independence position in the referendum for Scottish Independence. We are for the break up of the imperialist, warmongering British State with its history of oppression and leading role as a protector of global capitalism.

The Party should develop a clear strategy and Marxist perspective on Scottish Independence. We must raise our politics and profile and ensure our politics are heard. Socially progressive demands must be advocated politically and put upon the SNP and other bourgeois parties.

Bourgeois referenda are not enough; we need a Scotland for the working class.

3) The SWP, transport and the working class

Rail, bus and air services are dominated by greedy capitalist monopolies such as First, Virgin and Stagecoach, all only interested in money and profit. Private companies have wrecked public services and imposed

extortionate fare pricing, excluding vulnerable groups and the working class from easy, affordable access to public transport.

The Party should instigate a high profile campaign against the greedy bosses and shareholders of the private companies in the transport industry.

Transport companies should be targeted for Socialist Worker sales, leafleting and rank and file contact.

- End privatisation now,
- Nationalise, regulate, subsidise now,
- For workers power and workers control of all transport industry.

Aberdeen branch

PARTY HISTORY AND ARCHIVING

Time marches on – both for people and for a political party.

The SWP started with a meeting of 33 people in September 1950 and the number of those attending that are still around today could probably be counted on the fingers of one hand. Colin Barker's "50 Years a Revolutionary" is a current cause for celebration in Manchester because it is a genuinely significant achievement.

Even our first large-scale intakes of members, those from the heady days of 1968, are no longer "spring chickens". In short, much of the early history of the SWP will soon be moving out of the realm of first-hand experiences and into the realm of what is recorded in some way, shape or form.

I have recently undertaken a project to catalogue the pamphlets that our organisation has produced over the years. The result is a document entitled "A Brief History of Party Pamphlets 1951-2011" in which I give details of 375 publications representing well over 300 different pamphlets. I strongly suspect that there are many more Party pamphlets out there awaiting discovery.

My work was started because I genuinely believe that what we have had to say over 60 years in both national and local pamphlets on innumerable subjects is of real importance.

The work had to be started from scratch because there is no archive or collection I could access to uncover our pamphlet history and that raises an issue. How should we best preserve the history of the Party for today and for future generations? Not preserve it in aspic but preserve it so that the enormous wealth of information, of theory, of practice, of problems faced and problems solved can be available to support the struggle going forward.

In the fairly recent past the Party has deposited a full set of the Labour Worker and Socialist Worker newspapers at the

Bishopsgate Institute in London. This is a good start. In addition, the vast majority of the contents of the International Socialism Journal 1st Series (1958 – 1978) are online courtesy of the Marxist Internet Archive as is much of the ISJ 2nd Series from 1978 to 2003 (see <http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspaper/index.htm>).

Subsequent issues of the ISJ 2nd Series are on the ISJ website (see <http://www.isj.org.uk/index.php4?s=back>). The monthly magazine Socialist Review is also available online (see <http://www.socialistreview.org.uk/backissues.html>). This is also all good – as far as it goes. But what about the rest?

Where can one read first hand our women's publications "Women's Voice" (Series One dates from IS days and ran from late 1972 (No. 1) to Nov/Dec 1976 (No. 35). The second series started with the launch of the SWP in January 1977 (No. 1) and ended in July 1982 with No. 65)?

Where can one see our paper aimed at black workers "Flame", our publications for Asian workers "Chingari" or our youth paper "Rebel"?

What about the enormous commitment our members made to the publications of a large number of rank and file union organisations?

What about the industrial leaflets our members have handed out in their tens of thousands at factory gates or the workplace bulletins produced by our Factory Branches or groups of working comrades?

What about the Internal Bulletins and Conference Bulletins where major political questions were first articulated and then thrashed out? The list could go on and on.

I am convinced that there is a mass of this important historical material out there. Some of it may be in the libraries of individual members, some of it may just be in boxes in garages or lofts. Indeed, some far-sighted members and ex-members have already deposited their personal political archives in publicly accessible collections such as at the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick.

Whichever it is, the stage of development of our organisation is such that the time is now right to try and collate, catalogue and make available our political history in a more organised and holistic way. I would like to see the following happen:

1. Formation of a group of volunteer members prepared to take on the task of collecting relevant material pertaining to the history of the Party
2. Each relevant area of Party activity (e.g. Women's Voice, Rank and File, pamphlets, industrial leaflets etc) to be catalogued
3. Material to be made available through copies on the internet and/or deposit in a publicly accessible collection
4. The Party to agree one preferred publicly accessible collection (rather than the variety

of collections which are currently holding material) for the deposit of "official" Party archives and for members/ex-members own archives should they be considering disposal or deposit

5. The Party to promote the "best practice" that when members/ex-members are considering disposal or deposit of potentially relevant historical material they contact the Centre for advice

6 Regular archiving of material to be a part of the ongoing activities of the Party going forward.

I for one am happy to be involved in this overall project which I see as something of a continuation of my current Party pamphlets work. I am also prepared to receive any material that any member has that they think is important to Party history as a prelude to cataloguing/archiving. Most particularly, I would like to hear from any members wanting to be involved in the above activities – it is absolutely not a one-person job!

Trotsky said "the revolutionary party is the memory of the working class" and that is true. It is also true that the memory can play tricks so, as those that were in at the earliest stages of the Party's history bow out, it is vital that what they leave behind is recorded for others to learn from and build upon.

John (Bristol)

RAISING THE POLITICAL LEVEL OF THE PARTY

The unfolding crisis presents revolutionaries with new opportunities and problems, with old ones presented in new ways, and with situations which can shift and change rapidly.

Here in the UK, the rank and file is not yet generally strong enough to act independently of the trade union bureaucracy, leading us to adopt a more complex "hybrid" approach to organisation (Unite the Resistance) rather than the rank and file model we would prefer.

Working class consciousness is typically some mix of reformism and autonomism, but these ideas lack clear organisational expression at national level, forcing us to relate to a complex and uneven mosaic of individuals and groups across the country.

The complexity and fluidity of the situation makes political clarity indispensable for comrades across the country to act effectively, working with others to build the movement while trying to win them to revolutionary politics and organisation.

A large axe may fell a tree without being very sharp. To fell a tree with a small axe it must be sharp. We are a small party and need to be politically sharp and to grow as quickly as possible.

In this contribution I sketch out some ideas for raising the political level of the party which I hope comrades will respond to in IB2 so that branches, districts and fractions have time to consider those responses before deciding on any proposals they wish to submit by the deadline for IB3.

Class struggle and organisation

The biggest factor in strengthening the party would be a rise in struggle throwing up new layers of working class activists who can be drawn into and around the party. We can't wish a perfect party out of thin air - we have to build it with the forces available and in circumstances not of our choosing. But how we organise makes a big difference to how successful we are in taking advantages of the opportunities presented to us.

Those hostile to revolution see our obsession with building revolutionary organisation as a problematic distraction - we should not fall into the same error. Class struggle is the key; organisational questions are not primary but neither are they irrelevant.

It is important to recognise the important steps already taken which include the increased emphasis on healthy branch and fraction organisation, the Democracy Commission, the party educational programme, a more open culture of debate, and the broadening of the Central Committee.

Debate

The battle of ideas with other political forces helps revolutionaries clarify their ideas. The fact that the dominant ideas in the working class do not currently have clear organisational form means that the ideas which we come up against are rarely clearly and consistently articulated, so our external political battles do less to develop our clarity than in many other periods. This makes debate inside the party even more important for comrades.

Even without politically sharp external competition, comrades still need clarity - to motivate people to act, to ensure broad participation in our activities, and to ensure our actions are effective rather than just "going through the motions". We need clarity not fudge.

The SWP is not a debating society. We debate, we decide collectively and we act together on the basis of that decision.

Just as the party tries to raise the consciousness of the whole working class to the level of the most advanced sections, part of the role of leadership at all levels in a revolutionary party is to try to raise

the consciousness of every member to that of the most advanced sections of the party. Greater clarity amongst the widest possible layers of comrades helps us to be more effective in the movement, especially when dealing with sometimes complex questions such as in electoral work, anti-fascist work or Unite the Resistance.

One of the silliest ideas that pops up from time to time is that debate necessarily increases disagreements which necessarily lead to factions which necessarily lead to splits. Debate normally increases the understanding of all participants, increases the prospects of the "losing" side in any argument accepting the outcome, helps avoid mistakes and accelerates learning from events.

Excessive rigidity and brittleness in an organisation is far more likely to encourage splits than a culture of open debate, which ensures that minorities feel they have the possibility of becoming the majority at some point in future and so have a greater stake in abiding by majority decisions.

In our tradition we sometimes talk of "bending the stick". This is particularly relevant to questions, such as organisational ones, in which there is no single "right" answer, but a range of possible answers which each have advantages and present dangers.

Of course it is correct that increasing debate in a revolutionary party can in some circumstances lead to paralysis as people focus on internal debate to the degree that decisions are never taken or when taken are not properly implemented.

But would anyone seriously suggest that excessive internal debate is a mortal danger to the SWP today? We should bend the stick in the direction of greater debate in order to help raise the political level of the party and intervene in the struggle more effectively. If at some point in the future excessive debate becomes a problem - we should bend the stick back again.

It is totally alien to our tradition to fail to act to address a problem we actually have now for fear of a problem we might have at some point in the future.

Four suggestions

The recent Party Council unanimously approved a document from the Central Committee (CC) on arrangements for our 2013 conference which was circulated with Party Notes on 17th September. This reiterated our preference that conference should mainly consist of open debates, the decisions of which are captured through commission reports, rather than being a motion based conference.

Nonetheless, Party Council agreed with the CC that motions, used sparingly, can sometimes be useful at conference. Motions can be submitted by branches, districts or fractions by the deadline for the third internal bulletin (8am, Monday 26 November 2012).

Below I set out four suggestions in the hope that comrades will respond to them in the second internal bulletin so that people can consider the responses before deciding whether to submit motions to conference on any of the topics.

A. Debate in party publications

Our 2012 conference carried the following motion:

"Socialist Worker should frequently carry features on the theme "debates in the movement" which help readers to understand those debates and the SWP's position within them by giving space to a range of opinions.

"When such debates are also reflected within the party and united action is not immediately required on the issue, the features can also be used to air debates between SWP comrades in order to raise the level of clarity and assist debate in party branches and fractions."

While this has been a year of many debates in the movement, our paper has certainly not "frequently" carried such features, despite the first one (on Syria in March, <http://www.socialistworker.co.uk/art.php?id=27876>) being widely recognised as a success. September saw a debate on Scottish independence (<http://www.socialistworker.co.uk/art.php?id=29528>) and I look forward to the long-overdue debate on reclaiming Labour.

It is regrettable that the CC has not made a more serious attempt to implement this conference decision.

On many questions, including the elections in Greece and Egypt, debate has raged on the internet, often including many of our own comrades on different sides of arguments. Excluding such debates from the pages of our own publications means comrades who aren't keen Facebook or Blog users are excluded, and makes it harder to ensure debates between comrades take place within the party - leaving comrades less armed to take up issues.

B. Internal Bulletins

Our 2012 conference voted (far from overwhelmingly) against a proposal to have one internal bulletin before each Party Council meeting.

The political purposes of the proposal were straightforward. Events that require serious debate happen all year round, not just in the pre-conference period. Comrades can't seriously develop a point in a 3 minute contribution at a Party Council, and while branch meetings can allow far deeper discussion, they don't allow members to establish whether their local experience is exceptional or typical.

Though not "secret", not everything we'd want to discuss would be of general interest to the external audiences to which we want our publications to appeal, so internal bulletins are a useful supplement.

Primarily electronic Internal Bulletins mean cost is no longer a significant barrier.

Apart from the absurd suggestion that the proposal was totally alien to the Marxist tradition, and a fear that the usual suspects might write boring or bonkers articles (we don't stop them speaking in meetings, do we?), most of the objections to the proposal were about the specifics of the proposal, which had not been adequately thought through.

In my opinion the most important question raised about the proposal was how this additional forum for comrades to exchange ideas would link to decisions and action and avoid proposals being left hanging in the air or disagreements remaining unresolved.

We have plenty of national meetings (National Committee, Party Council) which could theoretically take decisions, but we currently lack the space for adequate debate to facilitate that. A bulletin wouldn't necessarily need to be tied to a particular meeting, though the CC could use and time them to circulate discussion documents before National Committee or Party Council if they wanted to stimulate debate in branches on particular topics.

It would be useful if comrades discussed options in the second internal bulletin so that a more considered proposal can be brought to the conference in January.

C. National Committee

Everyone seems to agree that National Committee (NC) doesn't work as well as it should, but there has been relatively little debate about how to improve it.

One of the 50-strong NC's strengths is that it is small enough that it is possible to have far more detailed discussion than at a Party Council or conference and it has had some genuinely useful discussions which have helped develop the party's position.

I would suggest that key weaknesses of the NC include:

- It is more an occasional meeting than a working committee - NC members do not interact or have any clear responsibilities between meetings.
- NC members don't have the information to have an overview of the party's work rather than just the bits they are involved in, which makes it less effective in debating important issues that arise in particular areas of our work.
- The London-dominated composition means the NC's experience doesn't reflect that of the whole party as well as it could, makes reporting back to areas without NC members more difficult, and means it doesn't complement the London-based CC as well as it might.

Perhaps one approach to strengthening

the NC might be for candidates to stand in particular constituencies (e.g. region X, fraction Y, "others"). NC and CC members could have a responsibility to submit a short written report from their constituency for circulation to all NC members in advance of each meeting, highlighting successes, problems, lessons and questions for example.

This would give all NC members a better grasp of the party's work, and help ensure that NC elections are not "popularity contests" favouring better known comrades irrespective of their current contribution to the party. It would also tend to encourage comrades on the NC to report back to their constituency.

If a system along these lines were adopted, conference would have to vote on the constituencies first, then on the candidates, as the constituencies each year should reflect the mix the party wanted on the NC, which might vary depending on the state of the struggle.

D. Central Committee and party employees

The SWP has adopted one particular method of electing its Central Committee for many years now - the CC or any other comrade can nominate a "slate" of candidates and then conference votes to choose between the slates.

In our tradition this is one of many democratic methods of election - which one is the most appropriate depends on the circumstances. Ideally the conference should decide the method of election each year. For an interesting discussion of this, see "The Panel System of Elections and the Bolshevik Tradition" (<http://splinteredsunrise.wordpress.com/2011/12/31/from-the-archives-the-panel-system-of-election-and-bolshevik-tradition-1945/>).

For our 2013 conference, I tend to think we should nominate candidates by slate rather than individually - meaning that comrades would propose a list of names for the CC, rather than individual candidates, as in the past. This has the advantage of encouraging the proposal of a balanced group and making it possible to bring in talented comrades who may not yet be widely known.

But after nominating by slates, I think this year we should elect individually, with conference first voting on the size of the CC, then comrades casting votes for potential CC members individually so that the CC elected consists of those individuals with the highest number of votes.

As far as I am aware we have no fundamental divisions in the party, so there is no advantage to either our traditional "winner takes all" slate election, or to balancing slates from two or more factions to force them to work together on the CC.

The main advantage I would see in moving to individual election is that it would reduce the huge premium for being on the outgoing CC's slate, which I think

a few years ago was a significant factor discouraging CC members from promptly bringing major problems to the attention of the wider party so that they could be resolved.

Doing so when in a minority would be very likely to result in losing a place on the CC slate, and so probably from the CC. Our traditional system of election acted as a barrier to airing and resolving differences promptly through an open and democratic process, instead allowing problems to build up and become personalised and factional.

I also think it is time we clarified the place of CC members and other party employees in our democracy, as inconsistent practices have developed in recent years.

Once a decision has been taken, whether by our party conference or by the CC we elect to carry this responsibility between conferences, every comrade should carry it out - this is essential to revolutionary democracy. But 99% of discipline in a revolutionary party comes through persuasion - we are rebels not robots.

CC members and other full-timers have a particular responsibility to win the party as a whole to carrying through decisions effectively. If some argue with other comrades against decisions that have been reached, or obstruct their implementation, this undermines our democracy, our unity in action and the effectiveness of the party.

However, our full-timers are an important (mainly young) layer of our cadre and it would be madness to prevent them participating in the party's democracy, losing us a valuable source of ideas and experience.

We should therefore clarify that individual CC members and full-timers can participate freely in the key areas of the party's democracy - NC meetings, internal bulletins, and speaking at party conference, without being bound by the CC "line".

Discipline is for unity in action in the carrying out of decisions, not to stifle debate. It is better that the strongest possible speakers from each point of view are heard to ensure maximum clarity.

Discipline is necessary in a revolutionary party to ensure united action against the enemies of the working class, not against our own members.

Ian (Manchester)

CLIMATE JOBS

Global warming is rapidly approaching critical levels. The summer of 2012 saw unprecedented temperatures around the world. Most of the US was in a state of drought and Europe saw unusual summer weather. Arctic ice has crashed to record lows, flooding, high-rain fall and wild-fires have caused disaster, drought and destroyed crops.

In practice this means that millions of people are already experiencing the consequences of climate change. Environmental disaster is an issue for today.

But simultaneously global efforts to reduce emissions are at a standstill. Despite the fanfare, the UN Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development that took place at the beginning of the summer achieved nothing. Compounded by previous failures to agree, Rio's organisers were keen to strike out anything controversial from the debates. As a result the statement signed in Brazil was full of platitudes, but little concrete action.

At the same time governments such as the ConDems are increasingly arguing that the free market will provide answers. Despite any evidence that emissions trading schemes and carbon markets have worked in the past, Nick Clegg and David Cameron are pushing the notion of "Natural Capital". This means pricing the forests, lakes and landscape in order to encourage business to view them in terms of money.

SWP members have been at the forefront of shaping an alternative to the neo-liberal agenda around the environment. In particular we have developed a campaign around "One Million Climate Jobs". We've done this while being active within the Campaign against Climate Change (CaCC) and in particular, we have built and developed the CaCC's Trade Union group. This has brought together trade unionists and environmentalists often for the first time. The union group has hosted three national conferences as well as meetings at many union events. We've also raised the question of climate change within wider campaigns such as Right to Work and Unite the Resistance and taken the idea of Climate Jobs into significant sections of the wider environmental movement.

The trade union group has produced four editions of a pamphlet putting the case for Climate Jobs. This has sold extremely well and the campaign now has the support of the UCU, PCS, CWU and TSSA unions. Recently Unite also backed a similar demand.

In 2012 we helped organise the "Climate Jobs Caravan" which toured the UK raising the idea of Climate Jobs as the alternative to environmental crisis and unemployment.

The idea of creating jobs that also reduce emissions of greenhouse gases is a popular one. Some supporters, particu-

larly those in the senior levels of the trade union movement, see Climate Jobs as part of a Keynesian solution to capitalism's economic crisis. They hope that massively increased government spending will end this crisis and prevent future ones.

Revolutionary socialists differ because we do not believe there is a solution to capitalism within the system. For us capitalism is a crisis prone system that needs to be smashed and replaced with a socialist society. Since the vast majority of working people do not yet share this perspective, the task for socialists is to find a way of relating to the mass of workers at the same time of trying to win them to more radical action and a more revolutionary set of ideas.

Simultaneously there is a tendency for some on the left to argue that capitalism can solve the climate crisis. Our analysis argues that capitalism is an inherently environmentally destructive system. This system of competitive accumulation can only view the natural world as a source of resources for the productive process, or as a somewhere to dump waste. This argument must be at the core of our environmental work.

The evidence of Copenhagen and Rio is that capitalism is not able or willing to deal with environmental crises. Far from moving away from a fossil fuel economy the tendency to exploit hitherto unviable sources of energy such as tar sands, or extreme energy sources like fracking indicate that the system is locked more than ever to the practises that are leading us towards climate disaster.

Since the technology to solve climate change exists under capitalism, the question is not "Can capitalism solve climate change?" but "Why won't capitalism solve it?" Campaigning around environmental questions increasingly takes on an anti-capitalist edge.

In this context, it can be useful to view the demand for "climate jobs" in a similar way to the way revolutionaries have raised "transitional demands" in the past. Leon Trotsky discussed the way that such demands could become a "bridge" to revolutionary politics.

"It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demand and the socialist program of the revolution.

"This bridge should include a system of transitional demands, stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat."

The demand for One Million Climate Jobs is a real one. In meetings around the country we have seen it fit with people's environmental concerns, and their anger at the Tories and the priorities of capitalism. If realised, such jobs could reduce emis-

sions of greenhouse gases enormously. But the demand also challenges free-market orthodoxy economically and environmentally. Raising the idea of Climate Jobs also raises the idea that the economy can be run in the interests of people and planet, not profit.

However, most workers recognise that the current government and any immediately foreseeable alternative are unlikely to create such jobs on this scale. In the past some governments (like the United States in the 1930s) created large numbers of jobs at times of economic depression. Today this would run directly counter to the neoliberalism that dominates the economic thinking of almost every government today.

Thus the demand for Climate Jobs immediately begs the question of what sort of movement we need and how we can win them. In my experience both environmentalists and trade unionists often talk about climate jobs being an "obvious" solution. Yet the failure of the system to even consider them further exposes the system and raises the potential for more radical action.

Unfortunately no significant social movement is raising Climate Jobs as a demand at the moment. In the recent past it did not seem impossible that such a movement could develop. In the run up to the Copenhagen summit in 2009 there were large mobilisations around the world. 50,000 demonstrated in London on The Wave partly as a result of a major mobilisation by NGOs. Yet the failure at Copenhagen led to significant demoralisation amongst environmental activists. Indeed Climate Camp, a big force within the climate justice movement, disbanded to become part of the anti-austerity movement.

There are some signs that there is a revival of the environmental movement. Moves are afoot to organise a feeder march and "climate bloc" on the TUC's October 20th demonstration involving forces from Climate Camp and other organisations. There are also growing movements around campaigns such as fracking.

The scale of the climate threat that we face may further fuel the growth of such movements. But there is a danger that given the enormity of the environmental crisis some comrades are pulled by the idea that we need to simply build a "climate movement". I believe that this would be a mistake. The sort of radical change that we need to solve the climate crisis will not come from such a single-issue movement, however large, but from a movement that is challenging the system in many different ways.

That is not to say that involvement in organisations like the CaCC is not important, but the fight against climate change and its effects cannot be reduced down to simply building such a campaign. This is why we've sought to try and raise environmental questions and climate jobs within

the anti-cuts movement and elsewhere, and why this needs to continue.

At the same time as trying to put demands for climate jobs at the heart of movements against austerity or unemployment, we must also be raising wider anti-capitalist politics.

We must point out for instance, both the inability of capitalism to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as its inability to deal with the consequences of a warming world. Climate change is already leading to increased disasters, famine and refugees. Capitalism only makes these problems worse.

Viewed like this, Climate Jobs are an important weapon in the arsenal of revolutionaries. They help expose the irrationality of capitalism and lay the beginnings of a basis for an alternate vision of an economy.

Climate jobs are not the solution to global warming on their own. Only a socialist economy can really deal with climate change and the climate disasters that we face without enormous suffering, poverty, war and racism. This is why we must also argue for revolutionary politics and change as we work alongside and within the wider movements.

Martin (Manchester)

ORGANISING PHD STUDENTS

In this contribution we want to attempt to clarify party work focused on PhD students, and initiate a discussion on the subject.

In the past few years the party has attempted to organise amongst PhD students, using both activity in the University and Colleges Union (UCU) and in informal structures outside of it (such as Education Activist Network [EAN]). This May a conference initiated by our members, alongside others, founded a postgraduate workers association (PGWA) aimed at organising "postgraduates who teach". More details of this can be found on the blog here <http://postgraduateworker.wordpress.com/>.

This contribution is based on the idea that our strategy in relation to PhD students has been insufficiently thought out and has been more a result of developments evolving, without any real discussion of what we are doing. We would like to question the focus of building amongst "postgraduates who teach" as being the best category to try and organise around. We do not claim to have all the answers but intend this contribution to spark a debate in an area of work that we feel is insufficiently discussed.

Organising as teachers

PhD students are often called upon to do part time teaching on top of their research. This has traditionally been paid work and has been subject to union organising campaigns.

The UCU attempts to organise this group, correctly viewing it both a potential future full time staff but also trying to prevent management use postgrads to drive down the conditions of the rest of university staff. Recently there have been attempts by universities to get postgrads to teach for free. A campaign against this occurring at UEL was one of the factors that lead to the formation of the PGWA.

In addition to being asked to work for free there are many other problems that post-graduates who teach face, and that we should attempt to organise around. There may be no contracts. The hiring process may be far from transparent, and getting teaching may be more a case who you know than whether you can teach on a course. There may be expectations that many hours of preparation and marking are done for no pay.

All of these issues provide ground to attempt to organise on. The teaching process as a whole does throw up many issues that can be exploited to attempt to organise PhD students, however we feel there are problems if we attempt to organise exclusively in this area.

One of the biggest problems is the fact that teaching can often not be an important part of a PhD student's experience. It is something that is often done in addition to research, primarily to gain experience to improve future employability rather than as an important source of income.

The experiences of teaching described above are not general; they may only apply in one institution or in a particular department in an institution. Further, and probably more importantly, not all PhD students teach, and even when people do it can be only a couple of hours a week. These reasons mean it is very difficult to generalise, and create a wider network of activists beyond those for whom there is an immediate issue.

Overall the thing that makes a PhD student a PhD student is the fact that they research. This forms the basis of our existence and so we feel it should be the basis on which we organise. We will now go on to discuss the position of PhD student in more detail before coming back to ideas of how to organise.

Class position of PhD students

The day to day experiences of research may vary depending on the type of research that is being undertaken. Generally, in the sciences, a PhD student will spend most of the working day in a lab or offices with other people - fellow PhD

students, research assistants, post-docs, researchers and faculty.

It is common for there to be set times for coffee and tea breaks within a department, which are seen as opportunities to interact and share ideas with people you might not be working with directly. There is an expectation that you will be in the office or lab during the day.

In arts and humanities it is rarer for students to have their own desk/office; people end up working in libraries, 'grad suites' or coffee shops. While the time spent working is probably the same, there is less structure to the working day, and less interaction with other people.

The majority of PhD students receive funding to carry out their studies from research councils, charities and for-profit companies. This is mainly received as tax free grants, which could be considered to be a last remnant of student grants. We would like to argue, however, that PhD students have a fundamentally different social position than that of undergraduate students.

In 'The Fire last time' Chris Harman describes students as being a transitory grouping who's final class positions have not yet been determined. In many respects PhD students are not in this position. They have graduated, and are part of the labour force in academia. PhD student could be better considered as workers who are producing intellectual content for universities.

Universities employ many other staff in entirely research capacities such as lab technicians, research assistants and post docs. Most of these will no role in teaching but would still be treated as workers. The UCU organises them as workers employed in a research role and they were called out in the recent strikes. Day to day the life of a PhD student has many things in common with these people, with the main distinguishing feature being how they are paid and the piece of paper they receive after 3-4 years.

The legal status of PhD students is different in other countries in the world. In France, for example, PhD students are paid a taxable wage, have contracts detailing their working hours and are covered by the European working time directive, limiting hours they can work. Obviously there are many difference between UK universities and continental ones but these should not fundamentally our class position.

That some PhD students do not receive a stipend could be used to argue that they are not workers, however the argument is rather one that they should be paid for the research they do. We would argue that, for example those on workfare placements at Tesco's should be paid as they are doing the same work as other workers there.

To develop this argument further, it is possibly useful to consider what a PhD student strike would look like.

Workers power comes from the fact that we run everything in society and by withdrawing our labour things will grind to a halt. If PhD students stopped working for a day few people would notice, however the same can be said for many others. If there was a prolonged strike by PhD students, alongside other research staff, a university's research output would fall. Universities are judged not only by their teaching but also by their research, and action by PhD students could paralyse this output of a University.

Two comrades at Goldsmiths have written an article¹ theorising the teaching done by PhD students as a form of precarious labour. We feel there are a number of problems with this argument. Leaving aside how useful the categorisation of labour as precarious is, we would like to question the extent to which this really applies to PhD students in the first place.

The key question is how much PhD students rely on the income from teaching to live. In most cases PhD students receive a regular, tax-free, stipend from a research council or private sponsor, of around £13,800 a year.

The motivation for taking on teaching work is not primarily due to financial reasons, but because of a need to gain experience that will help them in future job applications. Whilst some on lower stipends or unfunded students may need to extra money, this is generally not the primary reason why people teach.

In actual fact the position of PhD students (as PhD students) is reasonably secure compared to other alternatives. Once a student is awarded funding from a research council the funding is tied to them. If the university decided to get rid of the student, the group they work in will have lost funding and be unable to replace the person. This means that they might not have the time to undertake a piece of research before some other group does. In an environment where it is increasingly common for post docs to be employed on short 1 year contracts, the 3 years for a PhD can seem like a long period of stability.

Compared to places other graduates end up working, a 3 year contact is certainly a long time.

It is worth saying here that there is nothing contradictory in their organisational conclusions and ours. We agree of the need for the building of organisation amongst postgrad students that must both work within UCU and outside of it. Our (possible) disagreement comes is their focus on organising primarily amongst PhD student as teachers rather than researchers.

Differences of science and non-science students

We acknowledge that our perspectives may differ from other comrades who have taken a leading role in our intervention around PhD students due to the differing experiences of science and non-science PhD students.

Clearly there are some institutions, which are focused on Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, such as Goldsmiths, where the experiences of science PhD students will not be relevant, however the failure to understand life a science PhD student would present serious problems organising in Imperial or many other Universities nationally.

It is worth stating, however, that we do not feel that the differences are major and they should not fundamentally change the method of organising nor affect class position.

What are the differences

Science (and engineering) research is much more expensive than non-science research. There are potentially massive costs involved, particularly for experimental equipment, amongst other things.

This means the proportion of people doing self-funded PhDs is much lower than those in non-science research. For example of new students in 2009/10 14% of full time science PhD students were unfunded compared to 34% in non-science students.

The same difference is also seen in part time students with 44% of scientists self-funded compared to 65% of non-scientists. These figures are produced using data from a HEFCE report and treat maths, medicine, and engineering as sciences².

There is also a much larger amount funding available from government and other sources for science research, no doubt based upon the idea that some of this research is much more commercially useful. Indeed there are often collaborations between private companies and universities in research. For example almost 50% of PhD students in University of Cambridge Earth Sciences department are sponsored by private companies rather than research council funded.

It is also worth noting the total figures for PhD students: 14,045 starting in science based subjects compared to 8,150 in non-science subjects. This further demonstrates the much larger amount of funding available for science based subjects.

In addition to differences in funding there are also many other differences. The starting age of PhD students is often younger in sciences. For example mean starting ages in Chemistry is 24.7 compared to 30.0 in social/ political/ economic studies. The method of choosing projects is also different.

In science subjects potential supervisors will produce a project plan, which students apply to undertake, as opposed to students coming up with their own project, which is standard in non-sciences.

A combination of these differences leads to the experience of science PhD students being more alienated from their research.

While in theory a PhD project is the students and you are free to determine the where the research goes this is rarely the experience. In reality, decisions about the direction research goes must fit within plans of the entire research group determined by supervisors, grant committees or the company that is sponsoring them. The ability to determine what you do is defined only within these limits.

Similarity

Whilst there are differences between people doing different subjects, these are not fundamental. All subjects are facing attacks due to cuts in government funding and increasing marketisation of universities.

This means less funding for PhDs and PhD stipends values being eroded by inflation. For the last 2 years research councils have kept the level of PhD stipends at the 2010/11 level "in line with the public sector pay freeze".

The REF (Research Excellence Framework), and its predecessor the RAE, compound the pressure to generate outputs of research. Academics are judged by the number of papers they publish, but not just any papers, publications must occur in journals with high impact factors.

This pressure is translated down onto students being put under pressure to work for longer and publish more papers. Even where the research is not something that people can make a profit out of, researchers are still forced to fight to be first to publish key papers, and in any case, it is not possible to determine if research will yield profitable results before it is completed.

Organising PhD students as researchers

Research students are subject to various pressures. There is pressure to work longer hours; we know of PhD students who's supervisor initially made them work 6 days a week in the lab on the basis that as other people work on Saturdays so it should be a working day for them as well. It is not unheard of for PhD students to work on 7 days a week.

This is a problem faced in the wider academic community as well. We are told it is in our interests to rush to publish the next key paper (or patent); that it will look good on your CV or is vital to getting a job in the future. The same reasons given to get students to teach without pay. This is something that the PGWA could organise around.

1 http://www.newleftproject.org/index.php/site/article_comments/the_postgraduate_workers_association

2 <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2011/2011133/>

The vagueness of PhD students' situation gives leeway for students but also enables universities to pressure them into working very long hours.

We also think that teaching linked to research is another potential issue to organise around. Supervising undergraduate or masters students doing projects is something that is pushed onto PhD students, in a similar way to how, in reality, post docs end up supervising PhD students. This is another thing that can garnish a CV, but there is never any question of getting paid to do this, although it could be considered to be teaching.

The availability of teaching opportunities and conditions whilst doing it is clearly something that we can organise around, however there are several problems with the way it is being done. We must avoid being sectional in our demands. Having teaching opportunities linked to student status creates problems for other workers in the University as well as students in the future. We should fight for improved conditions, and oppose linking teaching to student status.

In general, organising PhD students as researchers still suffers from many problems, not least one of weakness. These can be overcome only looking at broader forces in the working class. For example at Manchester University during first set of coordinated action on J30 in 2011 the strongest picketing was organised and carried out by postgraduate students.

This group drew strength from the broader movement and at the same time insisted that our older colleagues join the strike. At one point a picket at the flagship University building was entirely staffed by postgraduate students who didn't teach but who had joined the UCU as student members.

One important thing that the PGWA has been successful in over the summer is exposing a couple of instances of research assistant positions being offered as unpaid work at Birmingham and UCL. The campaigns that very quickly sprung up around them were successful in getting the adverts for the posts withdrawn. (Research assistants are generally a poorly paid research position in University held by recent graduates and can be in some cases a step before embarking in a PhD.)

The PGWA responding shows both the organisation is already growing beyond organising solely amongst postgraduate students as teachers, and that there is the potential for organising researchers. On a day-to-day basis the work of a research assistant and a PhD student can be very similar. If we recognise them as workers who should receive a wage we should also recognise PhD students as workers and the stipend as our wages.

The period of changes that our universities are suffering from will have massive effects for everyone involved both. It has already provoked fights for PhD students as teachers. However there is no reason that it won't provoke fights for PhD students

as researchers. We should seek to organise amongst PhD students in the broadest possible category, that of PhD students as researchers.

To conclude the position of a PhD student is one that does not lead itself to easy organising. There are many pressures both in researching and teaching that lead to isolation of students. We must find ways to overcome these and organise in ways to encourage collectivity. The massive government assault on our Universities seeks to further divide people and encourage competition at all levels. We respond by building a political organisation against this that also raises concrete demands on working conditions both concerning teaching and research.

Neither UCU nor NUS can do this in a totality since UCU only seriously organised those paid a wage and NUS is focused on student issues.

This makes unofficial networks (such as EAN, PGWA or even UCU Left) more important than ever. These should not be counter-posed to the official structures rather we must build both inside the unions but also independently of them.

We face a government determined to destroy the higher education system as we know. Our response must be strong to beat back these attack. We hope that a debate around the issues we have raised can only serve to strengthen our intervention and ultimately the fight back against this weak and nasty government.

**Amy (Cambridge)
and Dominic (Liverpool)**

BUILDING UNITE THE RESISTANCE IN MANCHESTER

Comrades in Manchester have been working to build a Unite the Resistance group since November 2011. As we head into autumn with the TUC demonstration and significant strike action on the horizon, we would like to share our experiences of building Unite the Resistance to help inform comrades in other districts. UtR is strategically important for us and every district should be looking to set up similar groups in the coming months.

The vision

UtR is a hybrid organisation. It is not a rank-and-file group seeking to organise solely those at the base of the unions, nor is it a broad left aiming to capture official positions.

The trade union bureaucracy – the layer

of full time officials, mediate between workers and employers. Their position is contradictory – without workers supporting them, and without some ability to restrain them from action, they have no influence with employers and no role in society.

The bureaucracy is threatened by the austerity, job losses and Con-Dem attacks on employment law, but their position as mediators, their ties to the Labour Party, and their long-held pessimism about the possibility of making any gains after years of defeat for the unions create a profound lack of will to lead a real fight. They are the main block to real action against austerity.

Ideally, the SWP would like to see rank-and-file organisation, built on the principles outlined by the Clyde Workers Committee, who said in 1915 “We will support the officials just so long as they represent the workers, but we will act independently immediately they misrepresent them”.

Unfortunately, such organisation cannot be built in the absence of mass struggle. While there are huge amounts of anger and a willingness to fight among ordinary union members, there is not generally the confidence to do so without the official go-ahead for action from union leaders.

Union officials are under pressure from the attacks by government and employers, from members feeling increasingly angry and desperate, and from rivalry between different unions and sections of the bureaucracy. The result is that various sections of the bureaucracy would like to see more resistance and are prepared to encourage greater rank-and-file confidence in order to achieve that.

UtR brings together those sections of the trade union bureaucracy who are willing to encourage resistance with rank-and-file activists who want to push the fight forward.

The officials know they need greater rank-and-file organisation and confidence to deliver effective action. The SWP can work with them to achieve that, while using the space to encourage the development of rank-and-file networks in the hope of developing genuine rank-and-file organisation in the future.

N30 and after

In the run-up to the 30th November pension strikes the task of creating these networks felt straightforward. The UtR national convention on 19th November attracted 1200 activists. Local groups held sizeable meetings. But the signing of the Heads of Agreement deals by trade union leaders, and the subsequent demobilisation of the movement, created real difficulties in building UtR.

A number of factors contributed to this. Firstly, the concrete lack of resistance meant that building a group called ‘Unite the Resistance’ was always going to be difficult. Our launch meeting on 29th February, with PCS General Secretary Mark

Serwotka discussing the prospects for a fightback in the run-up to planned strike action on 28th March, attracted over 200 activists.

Within a month, and after the news that PCS had pulled out of the national action, attendance at planning meetings was down to single figures and a public meeting with FBU General Secretary Matt Wrack in mid-May saw only 12 people attend.

Shift in focus

The strategic need for a group like UtR had not gone away. Arguably, the sellout of the N30 strikes was a stark example of exactly why we need an organisation like UtR. But in the wake of the retreat, the focus shifted. A smaller number of activists (mostly rank-and-file) attended meetings, but they were angry and frustrated and were searching for answers.

They represented a “hardening core” of trade union activists, and UtR became a place for them to discuss developments in the movement, analyse the weaknesses, and try to figure out a way forward.

Many of these meetings involved quite high-level political discussions on the role of the trade union bureaucracy. We found in general that our ideas and analysis were widely accepted in these meetings. Activists also used the meetings to report back on workplace disputes and issues. Despite the low attendance at meetings (to the point where activists would express surprise at how few were present), those who did attend often commented on how useful they thought the meetings were and how much more clear and confident they felt afterwards.

Clarity

Another source of difficulty in building UtR has been a lack of serious involvement from comrades. UtR in Manchester has been built by and is attended by a relatively small number of comrades.

The demoralisation felt by many comrades following the sellout of the pensions fight can go some of the way to explaining this, but not all the way. Feeding into this was a lack of clarity and communication from the Central Committee following on from N30 and the subsequent developments in the pensions fight. There was not enough discussion in the Party’s publications (Party Notes included) of the role that UtR could play and the importance of building it.

As an example of this, Martin Smith’s article in April’s *Socialist Review*, entitled ‘How to get the unions back in the fight’ (<http://www.socialistreview.org.uk/article.php?articlenumber=11964>), failed to mention UtR once.

This was in the wake of the PCS pulling out of the proposed M28 national strike, and the article was an excellent analysis of the ups and downs of the pensions dis-

pute thus far. But there was no guidance or advice to activists on what they could do to start to reverse the situation. Comrades, and our periphery, needed more direction and clarity at such a crucial and difficult time.

We also needed more clarity about our relationship with left officials involved in UtR. Some of the left officials who were key to building UtR were pulled to the right in the wake of the withdrawal of the bigger unions from action, and have been hesitant about calling strike action since then.

This created serious confusion, both within Party districts and within our periphery, about whether these left officials would still work with UtR, and if UtR was still a viable project or not.

What we needed to answer these questions was for the Central Committee to keep comrades abreast of the national situation and the debates and vacillations of the left officials, at least in Party Notes if not more publicly.

A case in point was the UtR national conference originally called for 28th April. After pulling out of the M28 strikes, left officials hesitated over their involvement in the conference, and eventually the conference was cancelled without any real announcement.

This created confusion with UtR activists and we were unable to give clear answers as we had had very little communication about this from the Central Committee. We cannot hang the entire united front on the willingness of left officials to act and to call initiatives. We need broad local groups linked into a national network that can continue UtR activity when left officials are hesitant – and in turn put pressure on them.

Situations like the pulling of the M28 strikes can be delicate; if UtR (or the Party) is uncritical, we would be offering very little to the layer of serious activists we are building around us. But we also want to continue our work with left officials.

When vacillations occur, we have to have a hard and clear political argument with these officials. While this means breaking sharply with them over particular issues, it does not mean refusing to work with them where joint action is still possible.

We need to fight for the involvement of officials in UtR if they are serious about building a fightback to austerity; they don’t have to have a spotless track record to be involved. The involvement of left officials will give UtR credibility and will help us reach a wider base, as they have a wider influence and are sometimes able to use official structures to advertise events.

UtR can also be a useful forum to have debates with officials about their strategy and can put pressure on them to back more action. Officials in Manchester have had an on-and-off relationship with UtR. Because of their position it is difficult to sustain their involvement, especially when UtR

activists are criticising the official line of the unions. This is an area in which we are looking to develop and we will be making an effort to get more officials involved over the coming period.

Clarity is also needed around the role of UtR and its relationship to Right to Work. (There are still some comrades who mistake one for the other!) We need to be clear about the trade union focus of UtR, and we also need to explain to comrades why it’s important they are involved.

UtR should be a main priority of the Party and our members over the coming months, and possibly years. It is the vehicle with which we hope to drive the trade union movement forward, build our periphery, and start creating the basis of a rank-and-file movement. Every comrade needs to be involved in building and shaping UtR.

Broad and democratic base

An essential part of UtR in Manchester is its Steering Committee. This consists of 16 activists. 8 of these are non-comrades. 1 is an ex-member who is strongly considering re-joining. Just 4 are women. 13 are in the public sector unions. 3 are on the national executives of their unions. The Steering Committee gives UtR a broad and democratic base.

The Steering Committee constitutes a core of activists who take UtR seriously and help with the writing of leaflets and other practical tasks in between planning meetings. Recently, members of the Steering Committee and regular attendees have taken responsibility for organising leafleting sessions at their workplaces and at the weekend in the city centre. The planning meetings direct the group and are attended by between 8 and 15 activists, mostly (but not limited to) those on the Steering Committee.

Putting this Steering Committee together took some detailed work from comrades. We followed up activists who consistently attended planning meetings. We drew up lists of prominent trade unionists in the area and encouraged them to join. And we also invited activists from our workplace union branches or activist groups. We want to continue to expand the Steering Committee to have a clear non-party majority and to widen the number of different unions represented. We will also make efforts to encourage female activists to join the Committee, and to facilitate their attendance at meetings.

Into a hot autumn

UtR is a key priority for us as we enter another period with the possibility of an upswing in working class activity. In Manchester, the group is still too small to have a decisive impact in the wider struggle against austerity.

But it has strengthened the Party’s periphery in the area and provided a forum

for those who are most frustrated at the current pace of the fightback.

Our goal over the next period will be to draw greater numbers of activists into the group, gain more affiliations from local trade union branches and campaigns, and start making the shift from being mainly a discussion group to an interventionist campaign that feels like it has an effect in the wider movement.

Nationally, we need comrades to build UtR in their localities, and for national UtR conferences to give direction and impetus to these groups to help them intervene in the struggle. The national UtR conference in November offers a great opportunity for districts that have not yet got real UtR groups to rectify this.

If comrades build for the conference systematically, those who attend can form the basis for a local group if the conference is followed up with attractive local events.

The UtR group that we have built in Manchester puts us in a good position as we enter the next phase of the struggle. We have shown that it is possible to build such a group in times of defeat. We hope that comrades in other areas can use our experiences to help them to build similar groups. This will ensure that when we come out of the next phase of the struggle, whether we win or lose, we, and the working class movement, come out in a stronger position than we are now.

**Rick (Secretary, Unite the Resistance Greater Manchester)
Ian, Geoff, Chris and Karen (Manchester)**

BUILDING GENERAL ASSEMBLIES AT GOLDSMITHS

This piece aims to detail our experience of building for demonstrations and strikes at Goldsmiths last year. We tried to develop a method for building broad mobilising meetings that involved larger numbers of students and staff on campus. Hopefully this piece can contribute to the planning taking place for the national NUS demonstration on the 21st November.

The preparations for the term began over the summer break. There were planning meetings organised with both sabbatical officers and activists to put in place a series of events and publicity to be ready before freshers' fayre. Freshers' provided an opportunity to make contact with a layer of new students and engage them in activity; namely the demo outside the Tory party conference on the 2nd of October. We also used a pledge for the Nov 9th NCAFC demonstration and N30 that students could

sign up to and leave their contact details and also indicate if they were interested in helping organise. Part of that involved approaching societies on campus and relating specifically to them about why they should be involved.

The Tory party conference demo was the first test of the potential at Goldsmiths and we successfully organised a sizeable delegation. This brought together a network of students that would form the basis of the activist group that would organise and publicise for the upcoming mobilisations and events.

The first attempt at a broad organising meeting at Goldsmiths took place on the 3rd of October. It was publicised through the campus unions and was attended by approximately forty people, predominantly students, although there were some staff members. Whilst we felt that this was a good step forward, there were problems with the meeting. There was too much emphasis on the top-table speakers which limited the discussion from the floor. There were few plans going into the meeting and not many practical action points which meant that the meeting did not have a clear direction.

In the run up to the NCAFC demonstration on the 9th of November we organised a series of EAN meetings. These brought together a group of the existing activists at Goldsmiths. They aimed to develop a strategy for broadening out the assemblies and increasing the number of students and staff involved in the network, as well as ensuring the basic tasks of mobilisation were carried out. A few days after the meeting the Occupy London Stock Exchange started, which linked in with a wave of occupations across the world, which had a transformative effect on the atmosphere both on and off campus. This provided the opportunity to bring the spirit and excitement of occupy onto the campus. These democratic, participatory forums showed the potential of what we could build on the campus.

The day of the demonstration began with a rally and a teach-out at the front of the university. This is important for London based universities that do not organise coaches as a way of building a delegation. Although it would be possible for students to make their own way to the demonstration this provided an opportunity to build a collective atmosphere and convince those students who were unsure of whether or not they would go. It also provided a visible presence on the day that attracted students that would not otherwise have known about the demonstration.

The second assembly, in contrast, was organised for a week after the demonstration and was widely publicised on it. It was the first attempt to capture the spirit of the Occupy movement and although there were a number of top table speakers, there were many contributions from the floor. There were over 150 members of staff and stu-

dents at the meeting. The key draw for the meeting was a video link up with an activist from Occupy Wall St. The video link set the tone for the meeting and what was possible at Goldsmiths. An important point that he made was the necessity of finding a way that the broadest number of people could be involved in the movement; from militant direct action to letter writing.

We used sign-up sheets in the assembly to build networks on campus like we do for every meeting. In this case we added a column about which department people were in and what halls of residence they lived in if any. This meant that the meeting could break down into departmental committees bringing together both staff and students. There were follow-up meetings in departments that established where lectures were taking place in order to flyer the students and how to take up particular arguments relevant to that department. The committees allowed for a broadening and deepening of the networks at Goldsmiths that is not possible from organising college-wide rallies. The experience of the committees was uneven and not all of them got off the ground. However there were successful examples which were clear in the attendance of further assemblies and the turn out for departments on the November 30th strike.

The next major assembly was a week before the strike. We attempted to reach a new audience by holding an open-air meeting in the quad at the centre of the campus during lunchtime. The departmental committees reported back on their activity, which was useful for those committees that had struggled to organise. Practical examples made it easier to see the possibilities of moving forward. A smaller group of activists decided to occupy a management building in the run up to the strike. This provided another space for activists to debate the way forward and became one aspect of the mobilisation; however it tended towards internalised discussions which limited its ability to mobilise.

The strike day on the 30th of November began with pickets from 8am. Again we organised a teach-out to give a focus for the picket lines and a number of lecturers gave sessions.

A minibus of students travelled around the picket lines in the local area to show solidarity with other groups of strikers. They brought iced buns and flasks of tea to facilitate the building of local networks. By lunchtime the number of workers and students on the picket line had reached at least 350, which we considered to be a massive success for a smaller institution. After a triumphant rally outside Goldsmiths we embarked on mass to central London to join the main demonstration.

The sell-out of the pension dispute undoubtedly had an effect on the movement on campus. By January our attempts to build assemblies were less successful. This year the key focus is the national NUS

demonstration on the 21st of November.

It provides the opportunity to mobilise a much broader layer of students and opens up the possibility of relating to large numbers of people to the right of us. The experience of building broad mobilising meetings last year provides examples for how we can move forward at Goldsmiths and other campuses this autumn.

Søren and Jamie (Goldsmiths)

LONDON STUDENT COMMITTEE

Last year a committee was set up between London student groups, with weekly meetings attended by a delegate from each SWSS. This year a similar structure has been set up in the North, inspired by its success in London. This type of committee can serve as a model to bring together SWSS groups at a district or regional level.

The nature of student life can often mean a degree of isolation from the wider party. The pace of local university politics can make it difficult for students to attend regular branch meetings and students remain under-represented in national meetings such as Party Council and Conference.

Further, delegates attending these meetings from SWSS groups tend to be the same people and do not reflect the breadth of our student groups.

At the same time SWSS groups are accorded a degree of autonomy in their organisation and operations, but are often unable to, at least on a day-to-day basis, benefit from the experience of older comrades.

The demands on SWSS members to take up a wide range of political arguments ranging well beyond those centred on education are high. This makes it important to build reasonably localised forums, in order for regular meetings to both happen and be consistently well attended, in which we can learn from experiences in different SWSS groups and map out a common strategy at a regional level.

The London student committee allowed us to begin to overcome these problems. During periods of high activity, particularly as we head towards the NUS demonstration on 21st November, strategic coordination becomes increasingly necessary.

Last year we were able to effectively bring together SWSS groups across London to work on the cross-campus ULU election campaign. Where we wanted to push on a particular campus SWSS members from other universities would join the local group.

Similar methods of cross-campus organisation can be deployed where there is, for

instance, local strike action taking place. Through the consistent communication facilitated by the London Student Committee the domain of responsibility for SWSS members was expanded beyond their local campus and we could begin to operate more like the political organisation we actually are and less as separate groups.

Beyond this the London Student Committee allowed us to learn from the local struggles and debates that occurred throughout the year.

It is rare for a particular political debate within student politics to stay on one campus; they tend to spread quickly. One may draw on the example of a number of London University atheist groups engaging in the publication (sometimes only attempted) or the defence of publication of Islamophobic cartoons last year.

This issue rapidly spread across London at a regional level. If we are to fully engage with these debates we too must operate at a regional level and not just as local units. With delegates from each London SWSS group meeting weekly, and then feeding back to the rest of the local group.

We enabled ourselves to pre-empt debates as they spread through university politics and construct both well thought out arguments and practical responses in advance, rather than lagging behind the rapid pace of student politics.

It has become increasingly clear that university managements also learn from one another (not that that should have ever been in doubt). Where management at one university has had particular success driving through cuts and redundancies it is likely the strategy they employed to do so will appear at other nearby universities.

Structures like the London Student Committee allow us the rapid and reliable communication with each other required to generate effective responses.

Ross (LSE)

SWP CONSTITUTION

(1) Introduction

The Socialist Workers Party is an organisation of revolutionary socialists dedicated to the overthrow of capitalism internationally and the construction of a world socialist system.

We belong to and develop the revolutionary communist tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky. Central to this tradition is the conception of socialism from below. As Marx put it, “the working class must emancipate itself,

and in so doing emancipate the whole of society”. Socialism cannot be achieved by acts of parliament or any kind of dictatorship or minority action but only through the struggles of working people throughout the world.

Since capitalism is a global system, socialism can only succeed through a process of world revolution. We are internationalists who support struggles around the world against capitalism, imperialism and oppression. Accordingly we strive to build international forms of organisation and solidarity. The SWP participates in the International Socialist Tendency, which seeks to bring together revolutionary socialists worldwide.

The SWP is an organisation of committed fighters for socialism who believe that the working class is the only force capable of building socialism in the world. We strive to construct a revolutionary party whose overwhelming majority are workers. We actively support all struggles against exploitation and oppression. Within those struggles we always seek to involve the widest numbers in joint activity, and to advance socialist ideas.

Democracy is at the heart of socialism and is central to the workings of the SWP. The SWP is a democratic centralist organisation that decides its policies through full discussion and debate among its members and then implements these policies in a united and disciplined way.

The conditions of the class struggle change all the time, and effective socialist intervention requires members’ involvement in constant democratic review of party activity and organisation. In order to be effective in both carrying out the party’s democratic decisions and testing them in practice, we need to act in a unified way. Once decisions have been taken, all members are expected to carry out party policies.

Decisions by the Conference of the SWP are binding on all party members and bodies. Subject to the sovereignty of Conference, decisions taken by the Central Committee (CC), National Committee (NC) and Party Council are binding on caucuses, districts and branches, and individual party members.

(2) Membership

A member is someone who agrees with the politics of the SWP (as outlined in “Where We Stand”, which is printed in each issue of *Socialist Worker*), accepts its constitution, and works within and under the direction of the appropriate party bodies.

All members are expected to pay suitable subscriptions, depending upon their means, to take and sell *Socialist Worker*, and where possible to be members of an appropriate trade union and stand for the position of shop steward or its equivalent.

Any member over three months in arrears may be excluded from membership.

(3) Branches and districts

The basic unit of party organisation is the branch. Branches may be organised on geographical or industrial bases.

Branch members meet regularly to determine the branch's work, within the framework of national policy.

Branch members may decide in a meeting to establish some kind of responsible branch structure to direct the branch's work. Such structures can, when so empowered, make binding decisions, subject to review and possible alteration by a full members meeting or higher body. General guidance about these matters may be given from time to time by Conference, the Central Committee or the National Committee.

Where appropriate, branches may be grouped together in a district. As with a branch, district members meeting together may elect a district committee to coordinate party activity across a district.

Establishing a new branch or district, or altering boundaries between them, is subject to the agreement of the Central Committee.

(4) Conference

National Conference is the supreme policy making body and is held annually.

Branches and/or districts elect delegates to Conference on a basis proportional to their membership, as determined by the Central Committee. Only members of the organisation may participate in the election of delegates. Only delegates may vote at Conference and participate in electing leading committees.

Three months before each Conference the Central Committee opens a special pre-conference discussion in the organisation. Members are invited to contribute written discussion documents for internal circulation during this period. During the pre-conference period, district aggregates are held where CC members present members with a review of the previous year and an outline of party perspectives. These open meetings give all members the chance to discuss party work, raise questions and points of disagreement and collectively assess the party's development.

The Central Committee nominates a Conference Arrangements Committee of up to seven members, to be ratified or amended by a majority of delegates at the start of conference.

The CAC makes regulations and standing orders for the preparation and conduct of conference, subject to delegates agreement.

The CAC is responsible for the conduct of elections at the conference.

Members of the Central Committee, Conference Arrangements Committee, National Committee, Party Disputes Committee and full-time workers may attend Conference with speaking rights. The

Central Committee may invite observers to attend conference, and these may be invited to speak.

A Special Conference may be called by the Central Committee or at the request of 20 percent of the branches. The decisions of a Special Conference are as binding as those of Annual Conference.

(5) Central Committee

The CC consists of members elected by the Conference according to the following procedure:

The outgoing Central Committee selects and circulates a provisional slate for the new CC at the beginning of the period for pre-Conference discussion. This is then discussed at the district aggregates where comrades can propose alternative slates.

At the Conference the outgoing CC proposes a final slate (which may have changed as a result of the pre-Conference discussion). This slate, along with any other that is supported by a minimum of five delegates, is discussed and voted on by Conference.

Between Conferences the CC is entrusted with the political leadership of the organisation and is responsible for the national direction of all political and organisational work, subject to the decision-making powers of Conference.

The CC appoints all full-time organisers. District organisers represent and are responsible to the CC. They work together with the party members in their district to ensure the effective implementation of party policies.

(6) National Committee

The National Committee consists of 50 members elected at Annual Conference.

The National Committee assists the Central Committee in providing political leadership for the party and reviews the party's political and organisational work between Conferences. Its decisions are binding on the Central Committee.

In the event of a major disagreement between the Central Committee and the National Committee, the NC has the right to call a Special Conference.

The NC normally meets every two months between Annual Conferences.

(7) Party discipline and the Disputes Committee

Occasionally disputes between members and breaches of normal party discipline may occur. The party has a Disputes Committee to investigate and handle these matters in a principled fashion.

The Disputes Committee's functions are to maintain and strengthen party unity and principle and to investigate complaints relating to disciplinary matters

by its members or units.

The Disputes Committee consists of not more than 12 members. Conference elects up to ten of these, and the incoming CC nominates two.

The Disputes Committee is brought in where local structures prove unable to resolve disputes. Where appropriate, the Disputes Committee may arbitrate between members or party units.

Cases are normally referred to the Disputes Committee by the Central Committee. If a member has a complaint against a member of the CC or a party full-time worker, this is referred directly to the DC.

The DC has the right to refuse to pursue complaints if it deems any of the following to be the case:

1. The complaint is frivolous;
2. Based on the evidence presented, there is no case to answer;
3. The comrade concerned is trying to use the DC to win battles already lost in the democratic processes of the party.

In cases of serious breaches, disciplinary measures such as censure, suspension or expulsion may be taken by the Central Committee, or by a district or branch committee, subject to confirmation by the Central Committee.

Anyone who is disciplined and is unhappy about their treatment may appeal to the Disputes Committee, who will review the decision and can change or reverse it if they agree. The Disputes Committee may also take such disciplinary measures as it deems necessary on its own initiative.

Unless the Disputes Committee rules that exceptional circumstances prevail, comrades receive in advance a written statement of the case against them and are present when evidence is given to the DC. They receive a written statement of the DC's decision.

The Disputes Committee may co-opt members to serve for particular investigations. The Disputes Committee reports to Conference, where its activities are subject to endorsement or otherwise.

(8) Party Council

The Party Council is constituted of representatives of branches decided on a numerical basis determined by the CC. It normally meets once a year. Additional meetings may be called in case of need by the CC. Every branch shall have at least one delegate.

The Party Council reviews the political and organisational work of the SWP (or such aspects of it as it deems necessary) between Conferences, pools the experiences of the members in implementing the line of the organisation and advises the CC. It has power to take decisions on matters of general policy binding on the CC.

When appropriate, the CC may call

national meetings of party members to discuss any aspect of party work and organisation.

(9) National Caucus

Members in a particular industry, union or area of political work are constituted, where desirable, into a national caucus. The establishment of a caucus requires the agreement of the CC.

Caucus aggregates are held from time to time, either on a delegate basis or otherwise.

Elected caucus executives direct the party's work in the appropriate area within the framework of national policy.

(10) Factions

If a group of party members disagrees with a specific party policy, or a decision taken by a leading committee of the party, they may form a faction by producing a joint statement signed by at least 30 members of the party.

A faction will be given reasonable facilities to argue its point of view and distribute its documents. These must be circulated through the National Office, to ensure that all members have the chance to consider them.

Debate continues until the party at a Special or Annual Conference reaches a decision on the disputed question. Permanent or secret factions are not allowed.

Constitutional changes

This Constitution (along with "Where We Stand") is agreed by conference 2003, and amended by the special Democracy Conference of 2009.

(a) Either document may be amended by a majority of delegates at any future Conference.

National Committee elections 2013

Every year at SWP annual conference delegates elect a National Committee of 50 members. Its role is set out in section six of the party's constitution (which is in this bulletin). Those elected to the NC also attend Party Councils and Party Conference by right.

We call for nominations for the NC in internal bulletins 1 and 2. **All nominations must be received by 8am**

on Monday 26 November.

A full list of nominations will be published in advance. This will give delegates time to decide who they wish to elect.

Below is the nomination form. Each nomination has to be supported by five comrades, and the nominee has to agree to be nominated.

Candidates have to be registered

members of the SWP and up to date with their subs (this also applies to the comrades nominating the candidate). Each candidate should submit up to 50 words explaining why they should be on the NC.

At conference, the CC, fractions, Student Committee and districts can submit lists of recommended candidates to conference delegates.

Nominee.....

Branch

Nominated by

1.....

2.....

3.....

4.....

5.....

Please give a brief outline of why you should be on the NC (no more than 50 words)

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Please return this form to:
Charlie Kimber, PO Box 42184, London SW8 2WD.
Or email the required information to: charlie@swp.org.uk