

SWP: Chris Bambery resignation letter

Chris Bambery was - until yesterday - a leading member of the Socialist Workers Party for almost a quarter of a century. The letter below has been forwarded to me by a contact. It is by Chris Bambery, addressed to current SWP national secretary Charlie Kimber, for the attention of SWP members.

Letter to CC and SWP

10 April

Dear Charlie,

After 32 years membership of the Socialist Workers Party, during which I was National Secretary for 17 of them and editor of the Socialist Worker for five, I am resigning forthwith both from the Central Committee and the Socialist Workers Party.

The relentless factionalism in the organisation, driven by the leading group on the CC, shows no sign of ceasing and is doing enormous damage to the party . It is a cancer eating away at its heart.

At the special CC held on Friday 8 April I was told by Martin Smith I played a 'filthy' and 'disgraceful' role in the party, a 'foul role in Scotland' and despite the CC 'fighting hard' to integrate me I had 'spent the last year and a half organising against the CC.' Such accusations were repeated by Martin's supporters and were not refuted by yourself as National Secretary.

While not recognising the reality of such slanders, I pointed out if you believed them immediate action would be required against any CC member believed to be involved in such behaviour. None followed.

It is simply untenable to sit round a table or work with people who believe, and are spreading, such slanders.

These slanders are not just aimed at me but those who have worked closely with me in building the party and wider initiatives, particularly so in Scotland which I've held responsibility for since 1988 until I was asked to step aside this year to help prevent 'factionalism'. This step was criticised at a Scottish steering committee by some members who argued my role in the significant development of the Scottish districts, particularly amongst younger members, had been important. They too have been subject to similar slanders.

The party has been afflicted by factionalism for four years and grips the leading group on the CC who seem addicted to it.

It has damaged our united front work in all the campaigns - Right to Work most obviously but in all others. Stop the War is now treated with derision by leading CC members.

In recent weeks there has been no lead or drive from the CC in turning the party towards building the growing anti-cuts movement. The current article in

Socialist Review and the post 26th party notes on the way forward after 26 March both have virtually nothing to say on anti cuts campaigns.

Martin Smith has attempted to blame me personally for the weaknesses of Right to Work despite the internal arguments which have held it back from its inception and which have brought it near to derailment.

While all of us wanted to see the party grow the stress on party building has increasingly meant 'intervening' from the outside rather than recruiting whilst working alongside those who are building the movement.

Since Friday's CC I have been made aware that a major factional attack was being once more orchestrated against myself.

The SWP prided itself on being free from factionalism and on its record in helping initiating and building strong and genuine united fronts. That has been damaged.

I was one of the only two remaining CC members who had worked with Tony Cliff in a leadership role. Having worked closely with him on a daily basis for many years with, I believe the CC's current approach goes against everything he stood for. His analysis of Lenin's ideas laid great emphasis on taking a firm grip on the 'key link in the chain'. Its been clear for some time that the question of austerity would dominate the political scene, yet we've failed to position ourselves at the heart of the anti-cuts movement and our influence is not what it could of been. This is not the place to go into detail about the party's recent history, but Right To Work was initiated in bizarre circumstances (I learned the news from Party Notes) and the CC as a whole has never applied systematic pressure to push the formal position through the party.

For all of my 32 years as a member I have given everything into building this party, even making serious financial sacrifices including loaning considerable sums of money during the financial crisis which has affected the party in recent years, money I am still owed.

A revolutionary party is an instrument for making a revolution. If it is blunted or broken another must be built. I maintain the firm conviction that a party rooted in working class struggle that fights constantly for Marxist ideas whilst building unity on the basis of action is essential for the battle for socialism. For that reason, to take this road is not an easy decision, but it is one I have been forced to take.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Bambery