

February 3, 2013

The Central Committee's motion to today's National Committee meeting

As is well known in the SWP, there is a National Committee meeting today, Sunday 3 February. It is not current practice in the party for motions to be published in advance. We had decided to conform to this norm (while not agreeing with it) in the interests of party unity. However, others clearly did not agree with us and the motions to today's meeting have been published elsewhere on the web. We do not believe there is any further purpose in holding this information back from members who read this blog, and we therefore publish below the Central Committee (CC) motion to today's meeting.

We do not know – we are not allowed to know – if this resolution has the support of each and every member of the CC. We do know, from discussions with CC comrades, that there is significant disquiet and concern about direction in which the party is currently being led. We call on comrades within the CC to speak openly and freely about their misgivings.

It is not our ambition here to respond in detail to each point made in this motion. But we do make the following observations:

There has been no full and honest debate within our party over the way allegations of rape and sexual harassment against a leading member have been dealt with – and voting that there has been will not ever make it so. This issue has been grossly mishandled from the very beginning, the CC has not been open and honest with the party and it is clear that the party is not happy with what has happened. No matter how many times the CC decrees that this matter is closed, it is not and it will not be unless and until there has been an honest accounting within the party, in full view of the class.

The threats to expel members, for insisting that allegations of rape and sexual harassment be dealt with properly and for insisting on democratic norms, will not intimidate us.

The invention of deadlines and the post-facto endorsement of them, is not within our rules and we do not recognise the CC's authority to make

such an arbitrary pronouncement. At least 10 branches have so far demanded a special conference and as we add to this number we will insist that the party honour that call.

As we have repeatedly argued, we consider the issues raised and the CC's failures to be those of principle, accountability and democracy. But even in purely strategic terms, given that we are now in unprecedented crisis, are losing members, alienating comrades, being shunned by increasing numbers of close allies in the unions, movements, academia and our own international tendency, it is clear that this astonishingly arrogant refusal to take any responsibility and attempt to control matters by bureaucratic clampdown will also utterly fail to improve the situation members face on the ground.

Linda Rogers	John Game	Gonzalo Pozo
Kris Stewart	China Mieville	Adam Marks
Toni Mayo	Andy Lawson	Jamie Pitman
Andy Godfrey	Jamie Allinson	Will Rolfe
Hannah Elsis	Richard Seymour	
Gareth Dale	Alex Anievas	

The CC's motion reads: Central Committee

1) The SWP stands out on the left by the fact that it has a history of genuine democratic debate without permanent factionalism. We have developed democratic and accountable structures from our branches, elected district committees, the national committee and disputes committee, central committee, party councils and conference. In the recent period these structures were re-examined and strengthened by the work of the SWP democracy commission. We have full confidence in these structures and the method of democratic centralism.

2) This newly elected National Committee notes that the commission on "What sort of Party do we need?" that set out the democratic principles for guiding our current practice was approved by 239 votes to 91 by annual conference in January 2013.

3) At the core of democratic centralism lies the understanding that we have full and honest debate among comrades in order to reach decisions followed by united action to implement and argue for those decisions.

4) We therefore condemn the actions of those members who have circumvented these principles by campaigning to overturn conference decisions outside the structures of the party, using blogs and the bourgeois media. Many of these contributions have been characterised by the use of slurs, abuse and un-comradely language that seem designed to stop serious debate and make joint work impossible, as well as damaging the party's reputation.

5) This undermining of our democracy should stop forthwith. We reaffirm the right of the Central Committee to impose disciplinary measures for violation of our democratic constitution.

6) Many of these contributions have been fuelled by the outcome of the Disputes Committee report to conference. This NC affirms its belief in the integrity of the comrades on the DC and of the investigation they conducted. We note the DC was re-elected without challenge at the January 2013 conference. The DC report was approved by conference and the case concerned must be regarded as closed.

7) This NC notes that immediately following the original DC hearing of this particular case, information about it was leaked to people, some hostile, outside the party. This helped fuel rumours and misinformation about the DC within the party. This NC also notes the disgraceful covert recording of the DC session at conference and the appearance of a transcript on a site hostile to the party in addition to the reports and debates in public blogs and internet forums regarding these internal party arguments.

8) This has created difficulties for any future DC hearing. Therefore it is in this light that the NC thinks it sensible to consider these issues, in particular:

- i) how the future confidentiality of DC proceedings can be safeguarded
- ii) how future findings of the DC should be reported to the party

These issues should be considered by a body composed of four members elected from the National Committee today, two from the Disputes Committee and one by the Central Committee. It will report to a subsequent meeting of the NC.

9) The NC supports the right of the CC, in consultation with the Conference Arrangements Committee, to set out a reasonable deadline for calls for a special conference. We do not believe that it can be

acceptable for such calls to be collected together over a period of several months. This would institutionalise a practice of constantly presenting motions to our branch meetings. The NC agrees that the deadline for the recent calls for a special conference was 1 February.

10) We believe that underlying many of the recent debates in and around the party lie a series of vital political questions where we need to seek urgently to assert, develop and win our political tradition. Some of the key debates include:

- a) The changing nature of the working class.
- b) Lenin's conception of the party, and its relevance in the 21st century.
- c) Oppression and capitalism.
- d) The trade union bureaucracy and the rank and file.
- e) The radical left, the united front and the SWP.

11) The CC and NC are strongly committed to leading and facilitating extensive discussion and debate around such issues in every forum of the party. This requires a serious, systematic and urgent effort in all our publications, through branch and district meetings, wider party events such as Marxism and through educational and day schools.

Central Committee