

## Statement of the Democratic Renewal Platform

We welcome the formation of a faction which recognises the widespread discontent within the party. We declare our intention to join immediately, and invite others to do so.

In recent weeks, the lack of leadership from the Central Committee (CC) over a very serious crisis concerning the handling of sexual harassment and rape allegations has been compounded by a hostile approach towards internal criticism. It is clear that these criticisms are not limited to a tiny minority, but come from broad spectrum of comrades across the country.

Regrettably, the CC's attempt to provide a perspective thus far has been limited to blaming internal critics, the left beyond the party, and the right-wing media for the crisis. This is a political failure, insofar as it results from a shocking failure to apply our sexual politics, and has revealed a serious deficit in party democracy. But it is also an untenable strategy that risks doing irreversible damage to the party's standing in the movement. And it damages our ability to work within united fronts and alongside others on the left.

The motion carried at the recent National Committee meeting unfortunately serves not to solve this crisis but to deepen it. The attempt to curtail democratic rights to call a special conference, and threaten disciplinary action against comrades opposed to the present CC strategy, must be opposed. We also oppose the ill-founded expulsions of four comrades over this issue before conference.

For all these reasons, we welcome the creation of a broad, united

faction. And we support any project that aims to promote a genuinely democratic, tolerant culture in the party.

We pledge to work constructively inside the faction for its declared aims, and urge other comrades to join and work alongside us.

We also call for a special conference at which to address the issues raised by the faction. The purpose of the conference should be to identify and correct those aspects of our work that have led to the current situation, not only organisational structures but also failures in long-term analysis and perspective. We believe it must include in its remit the issues of party democracy and the structure and practices of the Disputes Committee. It must allow a full pre-conference period with internal bulletins to allow for the most thorough debate. The right to call such a conference is guaranteed by the constitution and we refuse to accept any arbitrary time constraints placed upon this.

Further to these points we would also like to suggest that our crisis points to severe internal deficiencies that urgently need to be remedied.

First and foremost, we must rectify the culture wherein female comrades could be so badly treated, and the term 'feminism' used as a term of abuse for those who object. We as a party have nothing to fear from a serious political and theoretical engagement with feminism as it exists today. We should therefore, in addition to examining the processes that led to our present crisis, work on developing and updating our traditional perspectives on women's oppression, and women's liberation.

Second, this crisis may be the most the severe we have experienced in recent years, but it certainly isn't the first. In the last ten years alone the party has been hampered by the Respect split, the split with what is now Counterfire, and the later split with what is now the International Socialist Group. We believe these crises are the culmination of deep-seated problems in our long-term perspective, and our methods of organisation, problems which we have never fully addressed or resolved. We will work constructively alongside other comrades in the coming period to address these fundamental issues.

February 8, 2013

<http://internationalsocialismuk.blogspot.co.uk/2013/02/statement-of-democratic-renewal-platform.html>

In our view, the combination of a large full-time apparatus, a Central Committee that frequently resorts to bureaucratic means in order to assert its authority, and the way in which the various party bodies are elected, serves to produce a mostly unchanging leadership which is able to hold the monopoly on the development of perspectives. This restricts the space in which to develop alternatives.

Third, there is an ungrounded fear of frank public debate in the party. The entrenched scepticism about the internet, though justifiably repudiating cyber-utopianism, is symptomatic of this phobia. Whereas the party once published internal bulletins in the Socialist Review, we now worry about comrades carrying on debates on social media. Worse, some comrades mistakenly think that such debate is the major cause of our crisis. Full and open debate is actually the way out of the crisis. We regard the diverse contributions from comrades to the International Socialism blog, for example, as a sign of health. It demonstrates a desire to develop alternative perspectives honestly and openly.

In a way, the CC has been right: this argument is about the sort of party that we want to build. The party aspires to be part of a mass party that can lead the working class. Such leadership would be impossible on the basis of secrecy and paranoia, since this necessarily excludes the class from the party's debates and decision-making.

As Tony Cliff wrote in 1960:

“Since the revolutionary party cannot have interests apart from the class, all the party's issues of policy are those of the class, and they should therefore be thrashed out in the open, in its presence. The freedom of discussion which exists in the factory meeting, which aims at unity of action after decisions are taken, should apply to the revolutionary party. This means that all discussions on basic issues of policy should be discussed in the light of day: in the open press. Let the mass of the workers take part in the discussion, put pressure on the party, its apparatus and leadership.”

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BARNESLEY	Sheldon Ben	LEEDS	Jack
BRENT	China	LEICESTER	Andy Paul
BRISTOL	Matthew Toni	LIVERPOOL	Tom Jules
BRIXTON	Adam Dave	MANCHESTER	Danny Jamie Tom
BRIGHTON	Alaina Chris Hannah Jess Lewis Martin	NEWCASTLE	Glenn
CAMDEN	Gareth Kieran	NORWICH	Emma
CANTERBURY	Keith Naomi William	NOTTINGHAM	Dave Matt
EDINBURGH	Alan Linda Luke Neil Raymond	OXFORD	Alex Amy Nathan
EUSTON	Esther Gonzalo Jamie John	PORTSMOUTH	Frances Kaity Aidan
HACKNEY	Andy Jennifer	SHEFFIELD	Jackson Martin Rob Thom
HORNSEY	Richard	STOKE-ON-TRENT	Caroline Gary
		TOTTENHAM	Jamie
		TOWER HAMLETS	Ciara
		WANDSWORTH	Jennifer Kris
		WIGAN	Katrina

In addition, the platform is supported by and in turn supports our four comrades currently appealing against their expulsion:

Adam  
Charlotte  
Paris  
Tim

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