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SWP Central Committee calls a Special Conference to discuss and reaffirm the decisions of the conference held in January.

Statement from the CC

1. The SWP has seen an unprecedented amount of debate and discussion over the last four months. This includes pre-conference aggregates, three internal bulletins, the conference in January (with over 550 delegates, two factions, and faction meetings), post-conference report backs, a National Committee of delegates elected from conference and post-NC report backs. Throughout this process the majority of the party has backed the Central Committee and rejected the attacks on the party's record and its leadership. But a minority has refused to accept a closure of the matters discussed. Instead of the party uniting over urgent issues of the class struggle, a minority seeks to drag us into continual internal debate. The latest example is the declaration of a faction, outside the pre-conference period.

2. The faction document not only contests issues discussed at the recent national conference. It also specifically repudiates the National Committee held on 3 February which rejected the central elements of the faction document by 39 votes to eight.

That NC also supported the Central Committee's motion by 39 votes to eight. It seemed that the basis existed for the party to move forward united and to throw itself into the class struggle. The report backs from the NC showed an increasing spirit of wanting to move forward. The faction, headed by the minority at the NC, seeks to set that back.

3. The faction document is extraordinarily unpolitical. It seeks to plunge the party into months of internal debate over issues that in truth were thoroughly discussed at the last conference and should have been settled there. It has nothing to say about the economic crisis and the fightback, the battle against racism and fascism, the union bureaucracy and the rank and file, Unite the Resistance, anti-imperialism, building the SWP - or much else. Presumably the

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faction supporters think the party is getting all of that right.

4. The CC does not accept the right to form factions outside the three month pre-conference discussion period. Such factions open the door to permanent factions and permanent oppositions, making it impossible to unite and intervene effectively. This time comrades want to launch a faction five weeks after the end of conference. Next time it may be five days afterwards. The SWP has never seen factions outside the pre-conference period – as certainly a large number of the comrades who have signed the faction statement know. The CC is criticised for acting bureaucratically. In truth it is the faction which bureaucratically seeks to use the lack of precision in the constitution to raise debates it has lost in other forums.

5. The CC rejects the specific demands of the faction document. We do not believe the DC process was fundamentally flawed or dealt with the complaint in a manner that besmirched our record of fighting for women's liberation. The complaint was a very serious matter which was treated with great care.

We reject the implication that the SWP's present CC, or the CC in place in the run up to conference, would allow any comrade who brings a complaint forward to be vilified. We have said repeatedly that every comrade has the right to take issues to the disputes committee without the worry that they will face pressure for doing so.

We do not agree with driving X from political life "for the foreseeable future" when the DC decided no complaints were proven against him and no disciplinary action should be taken against him. All of those involved in the DC case have the right to be treated as members in good standing. We do not operate a regime of innuendo and slurs.

6. The CC has not sought to stifle arguments. That accusation is laughable after the last four months. Nor has the CC tried to operate by unpolitical or administrative means. There have been no expulsions since conference despite behaviour which is unaccountable, undemocratic and against the principles of democratic centralism.

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Some of this behaviour has been particularly disgusting – such as recording the DC session at conference that then led to the Daily Mail article attacking the women members of the DC.

But despite this the CC did not have, nor does it have, plans for “mass expulsions”. We seek to win comrades politically while (as the NC agreed) we reserve the right to use disciplinary action against those who wilfully and repeatedly flout party discipline.

7. It is not controversial that feminism can be part of a process that leads people into struggle and towards a Marxist understanding of the world. It is a baseless slur that the CC sees feminists as enemies. We are always on the side of feminists against oppression. But we are also for winning women, and men, to a revolutionary socialist view, not adapting to a different view. We believe Marxism explains women's oppression and points the way to emancipation - this is not the same as slurring feminism.

8. It is clear that serious divisions have been created in our party. Sometimes genuine concerns have been preyed upon by a small minority of comrades who want a wholly different sort of party. A debilitating process of relentless internally-focused debate has gone on for weeks. The NC last weekend made clear that this must come to an end. Those who refuse to stop factionalising seek to continue the branch motions, the blogs, the Facebook battles and the inward focus for another 11 months. There must be a resolution - and soon.

9. The fight against brutal austerity and against racism, and the need for a socialist alternative cannot be sidelined while we look inwards. The party is not shunned or isolated. The danger is it isolates itself by not pushing out. There are signs of new struggles - and great movements across the world. Are we going to intervene energetically with all our force as socialists or spend a year debating the internal structures of our party?

10. The CC has opposed the demand for a special conference, and those that agitated for one failed to win enough branches to call one. But we cannot go on as we are. Therefore, to establish absolute clarity and to draw a line that nobody serious can claim to ignore, the CC calls a one-day special conference for Sunday 10 March.

We understand that many comrades who have voted in line with the majority decisions at our recent conference and have rejected the call for a recall conference in their branches, or who are simply weary of constant internal debate at a time of new possibilities in the class struggle, will not want another aggregate and a special conference focused on these issues. However we cannot allow factional debate to dominate party discussions for the next 11 months.

The conference will be to reaffirm the decisions of January's conference and the NC, resolve recent debates, clarify some elements of the constitution and move the party forwards. There will be aggregates over the next three weeks and an internal bulletin. Pre-conference discussion takes place in these aggregates, not branch meetings. Delegates will be elected on the same basis as the last party conference. Factions can be formed in the normal manner.

11. We believe all the decisions of the last conference and this special conference are binding, unlike those of our critics who believe they are binding unless they disagree with them. The special conference must be the final word. We demand factions accept that - in practice, not words. ends