

Sussex SWSS: Open letter to the Central Committee

Sussex & Brighton University SWSS condemns in the strongest possible terms the Disputes Committee's (DC) recent handling of serious allegations against a leading member of the organisation, the vote which ratified their report at conference, and the subsequent failure of the central committee to address the current crisis.

We note the failure of the DC in this case to carry out their investigative process in an entirely impartial way due to their composition, and the implications this has for any outcome they could have reached. We also reject aspects of the line of questioning of the two female comrades that came forward with the allegations as sexist, and at odds with the principles of our tradition. We recognize that the DC was faced with a difficult situation, with lack of precedent to enable them to handle this effectively. For this we fault the CC's conduct with respect to W and the concerns she raised over the past few years. We also fault them for their failure to intervene and correct for failings in the DC's procedure when they were so glaringly obvious, and for what many will see as their intentional misleading of the membership around the issue in past conferences.

To the CC, we say: not only have you failed W, X and every other comrade that might once have trusted in our disputes procedures. You have failed this entire organization, as well as the tradition in which it stands, by absurdly insisting on the shambolic series of fuckups and blunders that have constituted your "political response." The list of these includes a process of misinformation in the lead-up to this conference and previous ones; banning the faction that tried to use our democratic processes so that comrades could make an informed decision on the DC report's process; the removal or reshuffling of those CC members and full-timers that aired critical concerns regarding the matter; the moves to suppress debate in the organisation by asking comrades to "draw a line under it"; the expulsion of four comrades for an alleged "Facebook

faction” (in practice a Facebook conversation) that is likely no different in content to those serious debates in which comrades are engaged today, in their branches and through other mediums of communication; the political slurs directed at comrades who have openly aired their views, including the unhelpful brandishing of “feminism” as an apparent insult, as well as the wholly disingenuous implication that the problem at hand is a “generational disconnect”; and the concomitant new CC appointment to the Student Office.

The aforementioned cannot be seen as anything but an attempt to “smash” critical student voices. These issues, coupled with the poor treatment and lack of support offered to the two female comrades that came forward with such grave allegations, has led to a complete breakdown in the trust we have in your leadership. We express our utmost concern for the fate of this organization and the role we hope we can continue to play, as SWP members, in building a revolutionary organization capable and worthy of leading the struggle against all forms of oppression under capitalist society. It is with this in mind that we write to you today, particularly in lieu of a public statement on SocialistWorker.co.uk that shows a complete disconnect with the political and personal burden your membership has come to bear as result of this fiasco, but more crucially displays an apparent obliviousness to the political reality that comrades are facing in their local unions, campuses and campaigns as a result of this. Recent events have forced us all to take a long look at how we found ourselves to be in this position, faults in our democratic procedures, perhaps a narrowing of space for debate, or a developing culture of political regurgitation and acquiescence and the inevitable lack of accountability that results. It is with the long-term view of how the party got here and what is necessary for us to be able to move forward that Sussex & Brighton University Branch came to an almost unanimous vote of no confidence in the leadership. We will be moving for the current CC’s dismissal from their post at the earliest available party decision-making body and/or conference at which we can do so.

Finally, to our comrades in struggle, to our colleagues and our friends, we would like to express our sincerest apologies for the recent failures of our organisation. We understand the distress and

distrust that many of you have expressed as a result of this. We had hoped that the few responses circulated by comrades would offer at least some assurance that members of the SWP are fighting tooth and nail for the principles we share, and this letter should come as confirmation that Sussex & Brighton SWSS are no exception to this. We ask you to bear with us, to give us the opportunity to exhaust this line of enquiry, this line of protest, to allow us to fight for the very relevance (if not existence) of the organization that has equipped us to become the principled revolutionaries that you know us to be. And in turn we assure you that we will continue to uphold the proud tradition we stand in, that we will continue to fight oppression in our society in all its forms and variants and that we shall never dismiss or shy away from the criticisms and concerns of those in the movement and in the class as a whole.

We Call for:

- 1)** An emergency conference, so that this organization may resolve this political crisis in a way that holds accountable those responsible and gives the membership the clarity and confidence needed to implement our political strategy moving forward.
- 2)** An immediate public response that can provide clarity around the failures of the DC's due process.
- 3)** Delta to be removed from any official or public position within our organization, particularly given disagreement on the DC with respect to the question of Delta's conduct.
- 4)** The DC to resign their posts. Although we acknowledge the difficult situation the DC was faced with, we argue that their ability to carry out their functions as mandated by conference has been undermined by recent events. It remains the case that many members, including Comrade X, will not feel confident in taking their disputes to the current DC in light of recent events.

Sussex University SWSS Branch