

**The Final Agenda for the 105th Annual Conference of The Socialist
Party at 52 Clapham High St. London SW4 7UN on
Friday 10th April 2009 times: 10.30 to 17.30
Saturday 11th April 2009 times: 11.00 to 17.00.**

THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

- A Election of Chair, Deputy Chair and Tellers.
- B Permission for Branches formed in the last six months or those with late forms 'C' to sit.
- C Special Standing Orders report.
- D Arrangement by Delegates of the order of taking the items of business.
- E Fraternal greetings.
- F The 2008 EC and Party Officer's Report to Conference 2009.
- G Motions for resolution.
- H Items for discussion.
- I Any other business.

THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS: *At 10.30am: Conference starts with the General Secretary calling the meeting to order and asking for nominations for Chair.*

- A Election of Chair, Deputy Chair and Tellers by the Delegates.
- B Permission for Branches formed within the last six months or those with late forms 'C' to sit.
- C Special Standing Orders report.
- D Arrangement by Delegates of the order of taking the items of business.
- E Fraternal greetings from companion parties, branches, members.

The suggested order of taking the items.

- 1 Report of the General Secretary.
- 2 Report of Assistant Secretary
- 3 Report of the Central Organiser.
- 4 Master Form C.
- 5 Report of Head Office Organiser.
- 6 Motion, East Anglia Regional Branch
"That, especially in the light of recent events, the Head Officer Organiser should be paid a wage."
- 7 Amendment to the Motion, Central London
"Delete all from "events," insert "the EC investigate the costs, procedures and duties incurred by the party of establishing an employed post, and report thereon to

ADM with a view to hiring an employee at the beginning of 2010."

8 Motion, East Anglia Regional Branch

"That the remit of the Head Office Organiser include opening Head Office to the public."

9 Motion, East Anglia Regional Branch

"That the Head Office Organiser should be elected by the Party and not the E.C."

10 Report of the Central Branch Secretary

11 Report of the Socialist Standard Dept.

12 Motion, Lancaster Branch

"That the January issue of the Socialist Standard be exempted from the Conference rule stipulating early in the month delivery."

13 Motion, Lancaster Branch

"That a fee be charged for the downloadable PDF version of the Standard."

14 Motion, Lancaster Branch

"That a mentoring scheme be established to encourage new writers for the Socialist Standard."

15 Motion, South West Regional Branch

"This Conference holds that class is an ethical issue. Therefore, it is not inappropriate for this to be reflected in the language used in articles in the Socialist Standard."

LUNCHBREAK 1.15pm. CONFERENCE RESUMES at 2.30pm

16 Report of the Treasurer & the Financial Statement.

18 Motion, East Anglia Regional Branch

"That members who request current accounts from the treasurer should receive them no less than four times a year."

19 Motion, South West Regional Branch

"This Conference instructs that an annual grant be allocated to each properly constituted party branch."

20 Amendment to Rule, Lancaster

Rule 10: 'Delete 100% and replace with 80%'.

21 Item for Discussion, South London

"Should the Party overhaul its dues collecting system?"

- 22 Report of the Campaigns Dept.
- 23 Report of the Election Dept.
- 24 Motion, Central London Branch
"This conference instructs the EC to register the following additional alternative names with the electoral commission.
a) World Socialist Party (UK)
b) World Socialist Party (EU)
c) World Socialist Movement."
- 25 Report of the Premises Committee.
- 26 Item for Discussion Central London Branch
"Should the Party change its name?"
- 27 Item for Discussion, South West Regional Branch
"Would it be a good idea for the Socialist Party to look into opening a socialist cafe/bookshop?"
- 28 Report of Education Dept.
- 29 Report of the Publications Dept.
- 30 Motion, Lancaster Branch
"The EC should commission an updated edition of the pamphlet The Socialist Party and War".
- 31 Item for discussion, West London
"What Is Our Response to the Victims of War?"
- 32 Report of Advertising Dept.
- 33 Report of the Enquiries Dept.
- 34 Report of Audio/Visual Dept.

ADJOURNMENT at 17.30 on Friday

CONFERENCE RESUMES at 11 am on Saturday

- 35 Report of Ballot Committee.
- 36 Item for Discussion, Central London
"Would using proportional electoral systems for party elections improve our internal democracy?"

- 37 Report of Internet Dept.
- 38 Item for Discussion, Lancaster branch
"Would it be a good idea for the Internet Department to investigate the feasibility of running an experimental virtual Conference as a possible addition to Annual Conference?"
- 39 Report of BLOG committee.
- 40 Report of Archives.
- 41 Report of Library Committee.
- 42 Report of the Membership Applications Committee.
- 43 Motion, East Anglia Regional Branch
"This conference moves to rescind the 1980 conference ruling:-" That this Conference views with displeasure the abusing of members by other members that has been a feature of the Party in the last three years. It considers that letters, circulars and other statements naming members as liars and rogues, denying their right to be members, disparaging and interfering with Party activity, have caused and still cause grave harm in the Party. While the Conference accepts that what has been done cannot be undone, it is determined that this tendency shall not continue and instructs the EC to take firm action over any instances in future".
- 44 Motion, East Anglia Regional Branch
"That this conference views with displeasure the abusing of members by other members."
- 45 Addendum to Motion, Central London
"Further, this conference urges members to take the available effective actions necessary to redress grievances: informal resolution; motion at branch; resolution to the EC; motion of the EC; charge at branch; charge at EC; branch poll; party poll or special conference, all of which exist for the purpose of allowing comradely and democratic resolution of disputes."
- 46 Motion, East Anglia Regional Branch
"That party officers and head office organisers who flout the democratic process or operate against party rulings be instantly accountable and that mechanisms be put in place to do this."
- 47 Amendment 1 to the Motion, Central London
"Delete "party officers and head office organisers" insert "members".
- 48 Amendment 2 to the Motion, Central London
"Delete "flout"; insert "breach".
- 49 Amendment 3 to the Motion, Central London

"Delete "be instantly accountable and that mechanisms be put in place to do this" insert "can be held instantly accountable through the following mechanisms: informal resolution; motion at branch; resolution to the EC; motion of the EC; charge at branch; charge at EC; branch poll; party poll or special Conference, all of which exist for the purpose of allowing comradely and democratic resolution of disputes."

50 Motion, East Anglia Regional Branch

"This conference believes that a panel drawn at random from the membership should be established as an alternative mechanism to investigate and implement the resolving of disputes and possible charges. This panel would be dissolved after each case."

51 Amendment to the Motion, Lancaster Branch

"Delete in line 1 'believes' and replace with 'resolves'; insert after 'panel' the word 'be'; and delete the phrase 'should be established'; the whole resolution to subsequently read: This Conference resolves that a panel be drawn at random from the membership as an alternative ... etc (as before)."

52 Item for Discussion East Anglia Regional Branch

"Would it better in future that in the event of a member or members wishing to charge another on grounds of action detrimental or on grounds of personal victimisation, that the charge would always be taken to the EC, who would then always call upon a disputes committee to deal with it. This would over-rule any other which presently deals with the issue. The Disputes Committee will consist of a panel of people drawn at random from the whole party membership who will dissolve immediately upon reaching a verdict."

53 Item for Discussion Central London Branch

"Should Rule 31 be rescinded or amended?"

54 Item for Discussion, Manchester

"Is the party becoming too centralised?"

LUNCH BREAK AT 1.15 pm, CONFERENCE RESUMES AT 2.30 pm

55 Motion, Central London Branch

"This conference notes: that at the beginning of the current economic crisis unemployment in the UK was already in excess of one million, and is expected to rise to nearly three million ; that high levels of unemployment cripple the effective capacity of trade unions to defend living standards of workers ; that the only *method for escaping* economic crisis in the past has been the destruction of the value of capital in order to clear room for continued investment; and that an economic crisis *is itself a form of class warfare* waged by the capitalist class to defend the value of their own assets. This conference reaffirms that it is the contention of the Socialist Party that only conscious political action to abolish the wages system will effectively

save the workers from the adverse effects of *this class warfare*. Therefore, this conference instructs the EC to draft an open letter setting out these principles to be circulated to trade union executives, media outlets and the Socialist Standard."
[italics only to follow amendment below]

56 Amendments to the Motion, West London

In line 4, delete "**method for escaping**" and insert "**way to end**". In lines 6-7, delete "**is itself a form of class warfare**" and insert "**inevitably involves attacks on working-class conditions**". In line 10, delete "**this class warfare**" and insert "**these attacks**".

57 Motion, Central London Branch "**This conference affirms that it is the contention of the Socialist Party that nation states, being units of property, are barriers to the common ownership of the world; and that nationalism is therefore an ideology contrary to the interests of the working class. Further, this conference holds that the Socialist Party opposes all nationalist movements and all wars and conflicts arising therefrom for those reasons. Conference thus urges all branches to hold at least one meeting setting this case out.**"

58 Amendment to the Motion, from West London and South London
"**In line 2 delete "being units of property".**"

59 Item for Discussion West London
"**The Economic Crisis: Progress Report**"

60 Report of the Production for Use Committee.

61 Report on *Socialist Banner*

62 Report of the Standing Orders Committee.

63 Motion, Central London Branch

"**This conference instructs the standing orders committee to rule out of order amendments to items on the preliminary agenda which do nothing; have the same effect as simply voting against the motion; or render the motion ineffective or otherwise out of order. Amendments for simple spelling or grammatical corrections shall also be ruled out of order: though standing orders shall be empowered to make such changes where the necessity is drawn to their attention (subject to delegates being informed and approving of such change).**"

64 Item for discussion, East Anglia Regional Branch
"**That two conferences be held each year.**"

65 Report of the Ad Hoc Committee investigating the circumstances surrounding the estate of the late George Pooley.

66 Report of the Ad Hoc Committee investigating alternative models of party decision making.

**67 Adoption of Executive Committee and Party Officers' Report to Conference
2008.**

CONFERENCE ADJOURNS.

SUPPORTING STATEMENTS

ITEM 6 Motion, East Anglia Regional Branch

“That, especially in the light of recent events, the Head Officer Organiser should be paid a wage.”

The Party relies heavily on members whose time is not occupied by wage slavery in order to function. This has recently put both the Party and members in jeopardy. Furthermore it inevitably acts to limit the choice of candidates and thus the range of skills and abilities on offer. The role of Head Office Organiser is an important and substantive one and the majority of the membership would require a wage to enable them to choose to do the job. Making Head Office Organiser a paid position would inevitably increase the number of members available to do the work, which can only bring to the role a much wider availability of skills and to the Party a far greater choice.

ITEM 7 Amendment to the Motion, Central London Branch

"Delete all from "events," insert "the EC investigate the costs, procedures and duties incurred by the party of establishing an employed post, and report thereon to ADM with a view to hiring an employee at the beginning of 2010."

It is a big step to establish a post of a paid party employee, and the party should, and should be seen to, go about this in line with best practice. It is better for party democracy to establish the facts of going ahead with such a big plan, rather than issuing an instruction which an EC may later declare to be impractical.

ITEM 8 Motion, East Anglia Regional Branch

"That the remit of the Head Office Organiser include opening Head Office to the public."

Head Office, being on a prominent high street and comfortably presented within, is an ideal advertisement for the Party case for those passing. It would be foolish not to take full advantage of this by ensuring that passers by, or those coming from further afield, have access to Party materials and members with whom they can talk. Consequently, it would make sense since the Head Office Organiser is present in the building for a number of days a week, that part of his or her remit should be to ensure that the building is open to the public and to have a welcoming approach and engaging manner. Security need not be an issue because, for example, the outer door could be left open and a sign outside welcoming visitors could invite them to ring the bell for access.

ITEM 9 Motion, East Anglia Regional Branch

"That the Head Office Organiser should be elected by the Party and not the E.C."

It seems bizarre that, while we elect the E.G., General Secretary and Central Organiser, we do not elect as a membership important Party roles such as the Head Office Organiser. We would like to address this anomaly by moving to do so.

ITEM 12 Motion, Lancaster Branch

“That the January issue of the Socialist Standard be exempted from the Conference rule stipulating early in the month delivery.”

The January issue has to be at the printers by the middle of December, which means that there is no news coverage and the Standard has to rely on non-topical or filler material. It was not able to cover the Asian tsunami story until the February 2005 issue, which was frankly embarrassing. We

suggest that members wouldn't mind getting the January Standard up to two weeks late if it means the journal is up to date and on the ball.

ITEM 13 Motion, Lancaster Branch

"That a fee be charged for the downloadable PDF version of the Standard."

Charging for the PDF1 version of the Standard is to some members unacceptable. However, a quick review of some on-line political/semi-political journals produced the following results:

Lancaster could only conclude from this that on-line, the Standard is selling itself far too cheaply. This raises the question as to why the Party gives away one of its greatest assets on-line, yet charges money for it in every other outlet. Presumably, the answer is to promote socialism. Yet this can be done using the method employed by The Spectator, International Socialism, and Fortnight Magazine, that is, via on-line articles, rather than a digital replica of the print version. Let's stop imagining that the SPGB is a soup kitchen and its 105 year-old journal broth for those needy people who also have computers. If the Party wants a Socialist Standard to equal its rivals, then some of its members may have to bite the bullet and start expecting readers to do what the majority of readers of the majority of other magazines and journals do, that is, pay for their PDFs.

PDF: Portable Document Format is a file format for document exchange. For an example of a PDF edition of the Socialist Standard
goto<http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/jan09/jan09.pdf>

ITEM 14 Motion, Lancaster Branch

"That a mentoring scheme be established to encourage new writers for the Socialist Standard."

We present this as a resolution in order to gain an indication of actual support or opposition, without having every detail ironed out. Mentoring schemes used to be run for Party speakers, and it seems logical to us that something similar should be established for members who might like to be writers but who perhaps lack the confidence or the encouragement to do it.

ITEM 15 Motion, South West Regional Branch

"This Conference holds that class is an ethical issue. Therefore, it is not inappropriate for this to be reflected in the language used in articles in the Socialist Standard."

The Editorial Committee is of the opinion that the use of "ethical" language such as the word "justice" is not appropriate for articles in the Socialist Standard, due to the party's position being that the case for socialism is based on class interests and not on ethics. The case for socialism is indeed a class issue and is based on the self-interest of the working class as a whole. However, this does not mean that class and ethics are mutually exclusive. There is surely a very strong "ethical" or even "moral" element to the socialist case. Socialism will be a system in which

wealth will be produced and distributed in the interests of all of humanity rather than a class of capitalist parasites. It will be a society that does not tolerate the obscenities of poverty, hunger, war and waste which the moralists of capitalism excuse today. This in itself will be the basis of a truly human morality or ethics. In any case, we should not be dogmatic in avoiding words which are widely used and understood, and do not cause confusion for the reader about the case for socialism.

ITEM 18 Motion, East Anglia Regional Branch

"That members who request current accounts from the treasurer should receive them not less than four times a year."

It is important for the membership to see the accounts, where money is being spent, what for and who, if anyone, gets paid by the Party and if so how much.

ITEM 19 Motion South West Regional Branch

"This Conference instructs that an annual grant be allocated to each properly constituted party branch."

There is a problem with many branches having little or no funds. This has resulted from our decision to pay 100% of membership dues direct to Head Office. However, it can also be argued that it would be unnecessary and impractical to return to a system where a certain % is retained by the branch and a certain % paid to the party centrally. So, rather than overturn this decision we could adopt a system where 100% of dues are paid direct to the party centrally and an annual grant is then allocated to each properly constituted branch. It would be simple enough for such a system to operate, and for branches to account for the funds granted. This would be an accountable and democratic way for branches to have some financial autonomy.

ITEM 20 Amendment to Rule: Lancaster Branch

Rule 10: 'Delete 100% and replace with 80%

Despite the arguments advanced in favour of 100% dues remission last year we don't feel this has been workable in practice. Our branch cannot finance itself through collections at meetings and does not want to have to apply cap in hand to HO for hand-outs in order to plan activity. The extra payment to HO may seem like a net increase in income but really it is an extra burden of taxation on due-paying members. What capitalist employer or state levies a 100% tax? If some members pay HO directly, then let HO keep it all, but we should allow branches some degree of financial latitude, as well as continuing to give branch treasurers an important role, which the current rule logically denies them.

ITEM 21 Item for Discussion, South London Branch

"Should the Party overhaul its dues collecting system?"

Lancaster Branch has suggested an Amendment to Rule 10 whereby we revert to the previous arrangement where Branches retain 20% of dues collected, the remainder being remitted to HO. South London Branch thinks the time has come for a more thorough overhaul of the Party's dues collection system. The present system is both Byzantine and ramshackle being made up of amendments to previous arrangements which may have worked well enough in the past but have been overtaken by developments within capitalism. The Party has responded to these developments by poorly thought out adaptations which were incompletely implemented. Over the past few years the Party has been fortunate enough not to have to rely on dues collection to finance the work of the party and maintain Head Office. Should the time arrive where we have again to rely on dues collection the current arrangements may not be up to the task.

ITEM 24 Motion, Central London Branch

“This conference instructs the EC to register the following additional alternative names with the electoral commission.”

- a) World Socialist Party (UK)**
- b) World Socialist Party (EU)**
- c) World Socialist Movement.”**

This is not a move that formally changes the party's name, but allows it to prepare to, or use alternative names in specific circumstances (e.g. WSP (EU) for European Parliamentary elections), whilst retaining legal title to SPGB as a name. The use of such names could bring us into line with our companion parties throughout the world, and also highlight our unique position as world, rather than international, socialists.

ITEM 26 Item for Discussion, Central London Branch

"Should the Party change its name?"

Is it time for us to consider a name change for the Party? When the word "Socialist" is almost universally misunderstood and when so many other organisations describe themselves as such it may be worth considering what we may do in order to distinguish ourselves from the rest. We have the "Socialist Party" (SPEW - formerly Militant); the reconstituted "Socialist Party of Great Britain (1904)", more usually known as "Socialist Studies"; "Socialist Unity"; "Socialist Workers Party" and a host more. Would the inclusion of a simple preface such as "World" help to mark us off from those who use the word "Socialist" with such equanimity or is a more drastic change required?

ITEM 27 Item for Discussion, South West Regional Branch

"Would it be a good idea for the Socialist Party to look into opening a socialist cafe / bookshop?"

This could be a good way of attracting interest in the case for socialism, and it could be based wherever there is sufficient interest in setting one up and running it. Would this be a potential positive use of some of the funds held by the party? Standards and all other socialist material would be available for sale, along with other books that do not clash with or obfuscate the socialist case. Weekly advertised meetings to talk about socialism could be held. These could be advertised in the Standard and advertised in the local area. Every person who comes in could be told that the purpose of the cafe is to spread socialism and told briefly what socialism is - or given a card/pamphlet showing this information. The Declaration of Principles could even be displayed on a wall.

There could be a computer in a quiet corner for people to use to access socialist material / go on socialist forums. (It would have the necessary blockers to prevent access to premium rate sites!) The purpose of the cafe will arise during interactions with the local community and other networks, spreading awareness, and will be the subject of ongoing interest locally. It would provide a base for a branch and be a venue for visiting speakers and debates. It could also be used for live music nights and socials.

The running of the cafe and hopefully also the branch would be an example of real democracy in action. The cafe would be a democratic space in so far as is possible in capitalism.

ITEM 30 Motion, Lancaster Branch

"The EC should commission an updated edition of the pamphlet The Socialist Party and War".

This excellent pamphlet explains the Party's position on War clearly and persuasively, but is now very dated. We think an updated version would be a valuable part of our catalogue.

ITEM 31 Item for Discussion, West London Branch

“What Is Our Response to the Victims of War?”

The Israeli State's openly proclaimed use of "disproportionate" force on the civilian population of Gaza outraged ordinary people everywhere. We socialists, too, were outraged but discussion on SPOPEN and elsewhere revealed differences amongst members over how to express this. One member argued that we could not say to people in Gaza that they should not resist. Another, that we were not anti-Israeli enough. Another, that we should support the idea of a single, democratic and secular State in Israel. Clearly, there is matter for discussion here over how to express outrage and sympathy for the civilian victims of a modern army's attack.

ITEM 36 Item for Discussion, Central London Branch

"Would using proportional electoral systems for party elections improve our internal democracy?"

As our electoral systems stand, we use simple plurality (First past the post) for officer by more than two candidates there is a likelihood of a candidate being elected with less than majority support. For instance, were three members to stand for General Secretary, the winner would only need to have a little over a third of the vote. Contrary to some opinion, proportional electoral methods are easy to operate (indeed, they may be easier to count than the bloc vote), and fairer. Ranking candidates in preference order, with a "Re-open Nominations" (aka RON) candidate would allow us to continue our traditions of offering a choice even when there is only one candidate.

ITEM 39 Item for Discussion, Lancaster Branch

"Would it be a good idea for the Internet Department to investigate the feasibility of running an experimental virtual Conference as a possible addition to Annual Conference?"

East Anglia's resolution proposing two conferences has been ruled out of order, but in any case we feel there may be a better way of going about upgrading our democratic procedures. We think that more members could be enfranchised by an online conference than by a physical one and that it would be worth experimenting by doing a dry-run, similar to SPOpen but with a deadline and digital signatures to authenticate votes. Members might not want to replace physical Conference but we think the feasibility of an additional online conference ought at least to be explored.

ITEM 43 Motion, East Anglia Regional Branch

"This conference moves to rescind the 1980 conference ruling:-" That this Conference views with displeasure the abusing of members by other members that has been a feature of the Party in the last three years. It considers that letters, circulars and other statements naming members as liars and rogues, denying their right to be members, disparaging and interfering with Party activity, have caused and still cause grave harm in the Party. While the Conference accepts that what has been done cannot be undone, it is determined that this tendency shall not continue and instructs the EC to take firm action over any instances in future"

This is an inadequate and entirely inappropriate means of addressing conflict within the Party. We believe that sustained abuse in the form of victimisation should be addressed but that truths should also be spoken and that this resolution acts to merge the two and at the same time offer no direct means by which to take action to address either of them.

ITEM 44 Motion, East Anglia Regional Branch

"That this conference views with displeasure the abusing of members by other members."

This is a reaffirmation of the first part of the previously mentioned 1980 conference ruling that the abusing of members by others in Party is not acceptable. A distinction needs to be made between abuse and pointing out truths about a members behaviour.

ITEM 45 Addendum to the Motion, Central London Branch

"Further, this conference urges members to take the available effective actions necessary to redress grievances: informal resolution; motion at branch; resolution to the EC; motion of the EC; charge at branch; charge at EC; branch poll; party poll or special conference, all of which exist for the purpose of allowing comradely and democratic resolution of disputes.

It is important to go beyond merely condemning abuse, but also ensuring the party has mechanisms for dealing with it. Since they already exist, this amendment seeks to highlight them so that members may be aware of the range of options available to them to redress grievances. Complaining on Spintcom or the conference floor without taking action to seek to resolve the matter is as harmful as the abuse itself (and can perpetuate it), members should be encouraged to be disciplined enough to use the above mechanisms.

ITEM 46 Motion, East Anglia Regional Branch

"That party officers and head office organisers who flout the democratic process or operate against party rulings be instantly accountable and that mechanisms be put in place to do this."

We think that in the interests of democracy, and with reference to our standing in elections, the principle should be established that we should have recallable delegates. Delegates should always act according to the remit of their post and those who do not and defy the principles of the Party or conference decisions should be brought to account and perhaps asked to vacate the post. If we have no mechanism in place to deal with these matters within the Party how can we expect to deal with them in the light of a socialist delegate being elected to parliament when more serious damage may be done to the Party's advocacy of democracy in socialism.

ITEM 47 Amendment 1 to the Motion, Central London Branch

"Delete "party officers and head office organisers" insert "members".

Party discipline applies to all members, and to all holders of offices in the party, whether at branch, departmental or elected level. It would be invidious to single out only elected members (who are additionally subject to annual re-election as a disciplinary measure already).

ITEM 48 Amendment 2 to the Motion, Central London Branch

"Delete "flout"; insert "breach".

The OED defines "to flout" as: "To mock, jeer, insult; to express contempt for, either in word or action". Members have a democratic right to mock, jeer or express contempt for the democratic processes of the party. This amendment therefore seeks to correct the intention which seeks to chastise members who break the rules.

ITEM 49 Amendment 3 to the Motion, Central London Branch

"Delete "be instantly accountable and that mechanisms be put in place to do this" insert "can be held instantly accountable through the following mechanisms: informal resolution; motion at branch; resolution to the EC; motion of the EC; charge at branch; charge at EC; branch poll; party poll or special conference, all of which exist for the purpose of allowing comradely and democratic resolution of disputes."

The original motion calls for establishing procedures which already exist, this amendment addresses this flaw by listing them instead, so as to highlight them to members who will be better able to use them for being reminded of them and so improves on the intent of the original motion

to address indiscipline in party members.

ITEM 50 Motion, East Anglia Regional Branch

"This conference believes that a panel drawn at random from the membership should be established as an alternative mechanism to investigate and implement the resolving of disputes and possible charges. This panel would be dissolved after each case."

Dealing with discipline in the Party is and continues to be a very sensitive matter. Whether that discipline is directed towards a political transgression as regards the Party case and principles or abusive behaviour directed towards other Party members or members of the public, it is important that we deal with any issues in ways that can be seen to be impartial and fair. It is also important that we have mechanisms in place to deal with discipline that are effective and taken seriously. Some people may be happy with the existing disciplinary measures in the rule book but to others they seem wholly inadequate. Members, as well as branches and the EC can easily be labelled as too 'hard' or too 'soft' because the existing mechanisms reliance on a branch or the EC to deal with a dispute or charge leaves these groupings (partly because they are already somewhat fixed groupings) open to accusations of bias. What we need to accomplish is a fair, impartial assessment of any given situation and if necessary decisive principled action to take place as a result.

ITEM 51 Amendment to the Motion, Lancaster Branch

"Delete in line 1 'believes' and replace with 'resolves'; insert after 'panel' the word 'be'; and delete the phrase 'should be established'; the whole resolution to subsequently read: This Conference resolves that a panel be drawn at random from the membership as an alternative ... etc (as before)."

The resolution as unamended only states that Conference believes something to be the case, not that it resolves to do anything about it. This amendment merely firms up the resolution in the spirit in which we believe it was originally intended.

ITEM 52 Item for discussion, East Anglia Regional Branch

"Would it better in future that in the event of a member or members wishing to charge another on grounds of action detrimental or on grounds of personal victimisation, that the charge would always be taken to the EC, who would then always call upon a disputes committee to deal with it. This would over-rule any other which presently deals with the issue. The Disputes Committee will consist of a panel of people drawn at random from the whole party membership who will dissolve immediately upon reaching a verdict."

At the moment there is no impartial mechanism in place to deal with members whose political or personal transgressions may lead them to be charged. For example members are less likely to be objective and more likely to feel uncomfortable questioning a member of their own branch. We believe that a disputes committee would be a more impartial and accountable means of dealing with a charge.

ITEM 53 Item for discussion Central London Branch:-

"Should Rule 31 be rescinded or amended?"

In 2007 the Executive Committee brought a charge of action detrimental against a member under the provisions of Rule 31. Subsequently, six branches called for a Party Poll (as per Rule 26) and this charge was overturned. Is there any purpose in retaining this rule when, at least in the foreseeable future, it is unlikely to be enacted again? Or should it be amended in such a way as to make it clear that, wherever possible, breaches in Party Discipline should always in the first instance be referred to a member's Branch, bearing in mind that in the case of Central Branch this is not a viable solution?

ITEM 54 Item for Discussion, Manchester Branch
"Is the Party Becoming too Centralised?"

Increasingly, the Party's time and resources seem to be dedicated to Head Office and Head Office-based activities. Yet the branch is, and must be, the "unit of organisation" of the Party. In the interests of internal democracy, only upon which can the Social Revolution be based, we call upon all members to utilise their energies and resources on building up the branch structure of the Party.

ITEM 55 Motion, Central London Branch

"This conference notes: that at the beginning of the current economic crisis unemployment in the UK was already in excess of one million, and is expected to rise to nearly three million; that high levels of unemployment cripple the effective capacity of trade unions to defend living standards of workers ; that the only *method for escaping* economic crisis in the past has been the destruction of the value of capital in order to clear room for continued investment; and that an economic crisis *is itself a form of class warfare* waged by the capitalist class to defend the value of their own assets.

This conference reaffirms that it is the contention of the Socialist Party that only conscious political action to abolish the wages system will effectively save the workers from the adverse effects of *this class warfare*. Therefore, this conference instructs the EC to draft an open letter setting out these principles to be circulated to trade union executives, media outlets and the Socialist Standard."

Whilst, for the most part, this motion is self explanatory, its aims are twofold:

1. To set out a clear, concise and short statement on economic crises establishing some basic principles of socialist thought on the matter and setting out where our party comes into affairs.
2. To try and get this clear statement out to the places most likely to echo it and where it may have effect.

It thus serves as a reminder to members and speakers on where we stand, and presents a course for cost effective propaganda. It makes clear that at present the efforts of the present government to try and resolve the crisis by buying off (or as they put it, bailing out) the capitalists will ultimately fail, because they are premised on trying to save the value of capital - the very stranded capital investments that are blocking capital accumulation by failing to turn over. So long as capital is locked in non-performing assets capitalists are unable invest. Over the past twenty or more years unions in the UK have been particularly weak, not because, as some leftists would have it, the bureaucrats were holding them back, but because there has been a persistent and large pool of unemployment hobbling any capacity to take action. With the growth of unemployment we will see trade unions least able to defend workers at the very time they need help most. While strike action can be of benefit in a boom, it fails during the bust. This sets out, starkly, the reason behind the need for political action as set out in the DoP, and it is in the interest of the case for socialism that we try to get this across as concisely as possible to trade unionists and workers generally.

ITEM 56 Amendments to the Motion, West London Branch

In line 4, delete "**method for escaping**" and insert "**way to end**".

In lines 6-7, delete "**is itself a form of class warfare**" and insert "**inevitably involves attacks on working-class conditions**".

In line 10, delete "**this class warfare**" and insert "**these attacks**".

These amendments, while supporting the general gist of the motion, are aimed at clarifying its wording so as to avoid ambiguities. "Escaping economic crises" can be interpreted as "avoiding" an economic crisis, which of course cannot be done. To say that an economic crisis is a "form of class warfare" can suggest that crises are deliberately provoked by the capitalist class and its

government to attack working class conditions. Our amendments avoid these two misinterpretations.

ITEM 57 Motion, Central London Branch

"This conference affirms that it is the contention of the Socialist Party that nation states, being units of property, are barriers to the common ownership of the world; and that nationalism is therefore an ideology contrary to the interests of the working class. Further, this conference holds that the Socialist Party opposes all nationalist movements and all wars and conflicts arising therefrom for those reasons. Conference thus urges all branches to hold at least one meeting setting this case out."

Chiefly this is a presentational motion, to make concrete what has long been an accepted part of the party case. Further, it emphasises, for instance, that we do not oppose any particular nationalist movement as such (for example, we are not anti-Zionists) but rather all nationalisms in general. Whilst our opposition is not likely to be highly effectual, similar size organisations give great succour to various nationalist movements, such as Hamas, and prolong conflicts by raising expectations of outside help. Such campaigns take up a lot of time in trade unions and attract many interested and active workers. Nationalism often makes up a key objection to acceptance of the socialist case.

ITEM 58 Amendment to the Motion, West London and South London Branches

"In line 2 delete "being units of property".

We are not sure exactly what "units of property" is supposed to mean. We don't think others, outside the Party, will either.

ITEM 59 Item for Discussion, West London Branch

"The Economic Crisis: Progress Report"

When branch delegates discussed this subject at ADM in October last year, the crisis was still in its financial collapse stage. Since then it has moved on to the next stage of the business cycle: a fall in the production of real things and stagnation. At first building workers and bank workers were laid off. Then shop workers. Then car workers. Then steel workers. The downturn clearly still has a way to go. By Conference, unemployment in Britain will have passed 2 million and by ADM in October it will be well on its way to 3 million. We were a bit surprised that, at ADM, some delegates dismissed this clearly historic event - another big global depression like the 1930s and 1880s - as making no difference to us. But it does, both in terms of confirmation of our criticism of capitalism and in terms of its potential to make more workers consider and accept the socialist alternative. We feel that this is the sort of matter which socialists from all over the country should be discussing when we meet.

ITEM 63 Motion, Central London Branch

"This conference instructs the standing orders committee to rule out of order amendments to items on the preliminary agenda which do nothing ; have the same effect as simply voting against the motion ; or render the motion ineffective or otherwise out of order. Amendments for simple spelling or grammatical corrections shall also be ruled out of order: though standing orders shall be empowered to make such changes where the necessity is drawn to their attention (subject to delegates being informed and approving of such change)."

This motion is intended to supersede and improve upon: "That this Conference instructs the Standing Orders Committee that Branch amendments to items on the Preliminary Agenda which reverse or disregard rather than amend the sense of the original Resolution or Amendment to Rule are out of order and must not appear on the Final Agenda" (1984) This resolution was intended to stop "wrecking amendments", in effect, however, it has lead to claims that almost amendment

beyond simple grammar changes being accused of "disregarding the sense" of the original motion. The changes above would bring the party into line with common practice, that simply prevents amendments which render motions ineffectual, leaving the decision on the sense to the voting membership.

For example:

This conference holds that Cuba is a state capitalist dictatorship.

Amendment 1: Delete "state"

Amendment 2: Delete "state capitalist" and insert "quasi feudal"

Amendment 3: Delete all from "a state"

The first two of these amendments are "wrecking" within the meaning of the 1984 resolution, even though both are clearly intended as improvements (whether the imaginary people who moved the original motion would consider them improvements or not). The new wording would bring amendments 1 & 2 into order, while leaving 3 out of order.

The point on spelling is to prevent a repetition of the need for the of type of Central London Branch's amendment last year, we should not need a vote of the entire party to agree to move a semi-colon.

As now, all such rulings would be subject to the approval of delegates at conference.

ITEM 64 Item for Discussion, East Anglia Regional Branch

"That two conferences be held each year."

The party is less efficient and responsive to circumstances and changing needs because it only decides things once a year. Two conferences would still enable the level of discussion that already exists but would allow for greater progression.

SPECIAL STANDING ORDERS REPORT

Two items (out of the twelve) submitted by East Anglia Regional Branch were ruled out of order as the proposals in the motions seek to replace rules - they needed to have been

worded as amendments to rules, not as motions, to be in order. They were resubmitted as Items for discussion - items numbered 52 and 64.

After the preliminary agenda had been sent out, we received a letter from Central London Branch regarding three items which they thought was out of order; these were items 9, 17 and 43. We reviewed these but were agreed that although there were problems with the wording of item 9 and item 43 they were not sufficient to have to rule them as out of order, and item 17 may well express only an opinion but that again is not enough to rule it out of order. We have informed EAR Branch of this. Delegates at the start of Conference can make a judgement on these matters.

We call for nominations for the Chair, for the Deputy Chair and for the Tellers. Members seeking accommodation should contact the Central Organiser via the HOO at head office. Delegate's credential forms are enclosed for Branch Secretaries.

Standing Orders Committee

7th March 2009.

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<i>Total Politics, Socialist Standard, Liberator.</i>	<i>New Statesman.</i>	<i>Socialist Worker.</i>	<i>The Spectator; International Socialism; Fortnight Magazine; Prospect; Socialism Today; The Socialist.</i>	<i>Socialist Review; New Economist; Big Issue; The Chartist; Frontline; Labour Briefing; London Review of Books; New Left Review; Searchlight; Renewal.</i>
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