

Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the 105th Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Great Britain. Held at 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN, on the 29th March 2008

Present: Buick (chair), Carter, Deutz, Johnson, McEwan, Miller (after 1.15pm), Thomas, Wigley, White.
Apologies: H.Roberts.

Meeting started at 12.30pm

Four items received late, were accepted by the meeting. .

Verbal report from Comrade Stair

Report of the Socialist Standard Layout Team

Central London Resolution 28/3/08

Audio Tapes report

1. Minutes of the previous meeting

Comrade Johnson made a correction to Motion 13. That he had included HOO Terms of Reference. Agreed

MOTION 1 (Deutz and Wigley) "That the minutes be adopted". Agreed

2 Matters Arising

a) Images in the Socialist Standard letter from Comrade Moss 27/3/07, and Report from the Socialist Standard Layout team. The meeting agreed to deal with this item after the tea-break, by then we would have had time to read and consider the report.

b) Premises Committee letter 28/2/08 re Roof Hatch The EC were unclear as to whether the proposed figure included labour costs or if the Comrades suggested to do the work had agreed but were gratified that the cost would be so much less than the original estimate. It was thought that if the cost did exceed their estimate, they could apply for more money.

MOTION 2 (Wigley and Thomas) "That the Premises Department be granted up to £300 for the Roof Hatch". Agreed Nem Con

MOTION 3 (Wigley and Thomas) "That Departments and Committees be reminded that requests for funding should be complete, all costs, e.g., Labour costs, should be included and VAT". Carried 8-0

c) E-mail Voting. Comrade Johnson for the Ballot Committee said that in the mail-out for voting, there can be no e-mail vote. This cannot yet be secret.

MOTION 4 (McEwan and Johnson) "That in the coming vote on Conference Motions this EC endorses the decision of the Ballot committee that e-mail voting will not be permitted". Carried 8-0

d) The Situation in Kabale. The Chair read the letter (5/3/08) which the EC asked the Gen. Sec to write to J. Mwebaze.

MOTION 5 (Johnson and Wigley) "That the General Secretary reply to the emails from Kabale informing the senders that the EC is waiting for a written reply to an airmail letter from the General Secretary to Comrade Jimmy Mwebaze Carried 8-0

e) Branch Standing Orders. Proposed amendments. The EC had various thoughts on this report; that we are attempting to address different issues at the same time; that the changes would allow for branch members

to vote by e-mail and letter; that we need more information on what we are considering; it would mean more work for Branch secretaries who may not be Internet literate; that the EC is not empowered to amend Branch Standing Orders, this is just a report. (see annex to these Minutes)

MOTION 6 (Deutz and McEwan) "That the ad hoc committee make copies of the Proposed Amendments to Branch Standing Orders be made available to Branches for their comments". Cd 8-0

f) Terms of Reference of Departments.

MOTION 7 (Thomas and Miller) "That discussion on Motion 13 of 3rd EC meeting be deferred one month to allow circulation of Terms of Reference to EC members". Carried 9-0

3. Notice of Business

a) Access to the Party's Database. Comrade Miller has not been able to find Terms of Access, currently it is by Password. Comrade Wigley said that this is complicated by there being three databases in one. The Membership list is confidential.. Comrade Johnson said we are not allowed to pass personal information, could sell it if a box ticked. Comrade White questioned the legality of personal information stored on computers. Comrade Buick said we could be in breach of it. Comrade Miller said the Data Protection Act includes everything , but not germane to this conversation. Several members know the Password, should this be changed every year, who is meant to have it? The answer: Access to the database is restricted to the General Secretary, the Assistant Secretary, the HOO, Enquiries, Central Organiser, Socialist Standard subscriptions. Comrade Deutz said that it used to be restricted to the General Secretary, and thought that the password should be changed.

MOTION 8 (Miller and Thomas) "That access to the computerised membership/subscribers/enquiries database be restricted to the following: Gen Sec., Asst. Sec., Treasurer., Asst. Treasurer., Central Organiser., HOO., Enquiries Dept., and Socialist Standard distribution. And that the password to the database be changed whenever there is a change in personnel. Carried 9-0

b) Access to the Party's E-mail Account. Comrade Miller questioned who should access remotely, can all? At present it is Comrades Miller and Buick. Comrades McEwan and Deutz felt that if present arrangements work, things should be left as they are.

MOTION 9 (McEwan and Miller) "That any Officer, Committee or Department who wished to access the Party's e-mail account remotely, should abstain the authorisation of the EC". Carried 9-0

MOTION 10 (Thomas and Deutz) "The Central Organiser and the Asst. Secretary be allowed remote access to the Party's e-mail account". Carried 9-0

4. A Matter of Urgency

Comrade Stair reported that he had received a threatening letter. After a lengthy discussion the EC deplored that this could happen in the Socialist Party but felt it could not take the matter any further at this stage.

5 Floor Resolutions carried at Conference 2008

a). Buick (West London) and Chesham (Central London) "That this Conference recommends that the environment pamphlet 'An Inconvenient Question' be

sent for publication immediately after the EC fixes a price at its meeting on the 29th of March. Carried 13-0

b). Chesham (Central London) and Allen (EARB) “That this Conference recommends that the EC investigates the possibility of opening a deposit account with Nationwide Building Society “. Cd 15-0.

c) Chesham (Central London) and Hart (South London) “This Conference recommends that the question of the Head Office Shop Front (see 2005 resolution) be referred to the Premises Committee”. Carried 9-0

On the second resolution Comrade F. Allen made a contribution. He has received advice from people in the Futures market. Northern Rock said to be the best to invest in. No depositor has lost any money, but they only deal with private person accounts, or business accounts. Nationwide do and are still a building society. Halifax pay 5 ½%, we could open with £10.000 as a deposit account, could have cheque account for a year.

Comrade Thomas (Treasurer) said that we could certainly open a Nationwide account with £30.000, to spread further, needs a investigative committee. Needs members willing to go through the hoops of becoming signatories, have to show passports, bank accounts etc. We need two volunteers to operate an account .

MOTION 11 (Thomas and Wigley) “ It was agreed that Comrades Allen and D.Chesham work with the Treasurer”. Carried 9-0

MOTION 12 (Thomas and Wigley) “That the Treasurer, in association with Comrades Chesham and Allen, opens a Nationwide account and that the Treasurer be authorised to transfer £30.000 to that account pending the establishment of a Committee to advise on the placement of the Party’s money. Carried 9-0

MOTION 13 (White and McEwan) “That a call be made for nominations to a Committee to advise the Treasurer on the placement of the Party money”. Carried 8-0 1 absent

On the first resolution: Comrade Stair reported that the Publication Committee now have one less person, Comrade Miller has been unable to continue and has resigned. Now there is just him and Comrade Nigel McCullough. Comrade Stair suggests a selling price of £2 and is about to e-mail the last draft of the pamphlet to Cmd. McCullough.

MOTION 14 (Wigley and Thomas) “That the pamphlet be published, with a full colour front cover, and a print run of 500, selling price of £2.” Carried 9-0

MOTION 15 (Deutz and Wigley) “That a call be made for a third person for the Publications Committee”. Agreed

On the third resolution.

MOTION 16 (Wigley and White) “That the matter of the Head Office Shop Front be referred to the Premises Committee”. Agreed

A tea-break from 2.55pm. till 3.20pm.

6. The meeting returned to the matter of the Socialist Standard Layout Team Report.

The EC. had various opinions: Comrade Wigley thought that the team should receive an allowance to cover picture costs; Comrade Miller took issue with ‘crushing restrictions’, the current layout team has decided to use uncredited images, he would rather see no images at all, than have a legal risk, we could give them a budget to allow them to use non-copyright

material; Comrade White thought we should have a Party photo images library; Comrade Deutz agreed that it is a legal issue and that the team should subscribe to a photo library, thinks that pictures should be used sparingly.

MOTION 17 (Wigley and Thomas) "That the Layout Committee be authorised to obtain pictures for the Socialist Standard from appropriate Image Libraries as appropriate, subject to budget cap of £500 a year. That the Committee report to the May EC".

In discussion on the motion Comrade Wigley opening said that they won't know what they are getting into until they do; Comrade McEwan would still prefer that we authorise them to join these libraries; Comrade Deutz noted that images on current affairs was not available; Comrade Thomas said the Standard is not that kind of journal, he reported that the team purchase, the libraries send an invoice and he pays, and that we have in the past been approached by the copyright people; Comrade Miller said that most Image libraries one buys a certain credit, if they have big budget, they can buy a lot of credits which don't expire.

The motion was carried: 9-0

MOTION 18 (Wigley and Thomas) "That the 'Readability section of the report be put onto SPOPEN". Carried 9-0

Comrade Thomas said that we can't please all the people all the time, perhaps we could have a Readers Survey on Readability and Appearance, an A4 sheet in the Standard over 3 months.

Comrade Miller suggests waiting until we see what the response to SPOPEN is.

MOTION 19 (McEwan and Wigley) "That a copy of the Readability section be sent to all Branch Secretaries in written form". Carried 9-0

7. Forms A and F

i)Form A for Comrade Bill Martin from Central London Branch

MOTION 20 (Wigley and White) "That we accept the form A". Carried 9-0

ii) Form F for J. Lawrie from Central London Branch. The meeting was told that he has joined 'Respect'.

MOTION 21 (Thomas and Wigley) "Moved acceptance". Agreed

iii)Form F for J.McPhail of West Midlands Regional Branch. No response to letters or e-mails.

iv)Form F for A. Stone of West Midlands Regional Branch. No response to letters and e-mails.

MOTION 22 (Wigley and Thomas) "Moved acceptance of the two Form F's". Carried.9-0

v) Letter from Herbert Rwodzi of Harare, Zimbabwe,26/2/08.

Comrade Rwodzi writes that he has been out of contact with the Party despite the fact that correspondence has been sent to him. He wishes to remain a member and be active in the Socialist cause.

MOTION 23 (Wigley and Thomas) "That the Comrade be thanked for his letter.

That his details be passed to the Central Branch Secretary and that the Gen. Sec. check the Membership List to ensure that he has not been lapsed". Agreed 9-0

8. Accounts

Accounts are for the last 6 months of 2007, the whole year has yet to be audited (being sent to branches separately).

Note the refund of some £12,000 for overpayment on Electricity. Comrade

Thomas is mystified by the discrepancy of £161.16 which is exactly the same as the BT bill but though he has checked and re-checked, there is as yet no explanation for this.

MOTION 24 (Wigley and Deutz) "Move to approve the accounts". Carried 9-0
Comrade Thomas reported that South West Regional Branch had difficulty in opening an account with Nationwide. He gave them £50 to help with this but needs the retrospective authorisation from the EC. .

MOTION 25 (Wigley and McEwan) "This EC approves the action of the Treasurer to SWRB to open a bank account". Carried 8-0-1

9. Reports of Party Officers, Committees and Department's.

i) Election Department Report.25/3/08. Comrade Colborn has requested permission to contest a seat on Durham County Council again this year. He missed the first March EC meeting.

EC members debated the wisdom of contesting in an area without the support of members, felt it didn't do the member any favours, queried the cost, felt that we should abide by the Rule and that the request should come from a branch. Comrade Johnson said that in the past the EC has ignored Rule 28. Comrade Buick, for Election Dept, said the cost would have been about £30, that Comrade Colborn has contested for 12 years or more, we should encourage him to gain support of his branch. The EC expresses regret to him.

MOTION 26 (Deutz and Thomas) "In view of the lack of a Branch to support a candidate this EC cannot give permission to Comrade Colborn to contest a seat on Durham County Council". Carried 8-1

ii) HOO. Has three items to discuss. 1) The Franking Machine, 2) Parking permits, 3) Storage boxes.

On the Franking Machine he had two quotes, one from Pitney Bowes, the other from the Post Office, they seem to be equal in what they quote. On the Parking Permits, they cost £100 for 50., should we charge members or ask for a donation. The EC considered this and thought that we could put extra money into the collection, works out at £3 a time., and that we should be wary at dishing these out, don't overuse, and as long as it doesn't preclude people who are coming here to do some work. Users of the tickets have to go to a marked bay, parking costs £1-80 per hour.

MOTION 27 (Thomas and Deutz) "Moves that members be charged £3 a ticket". Carried 4-3-2

On Storage Boxes Comrade Johnson gave the cost of an amount of boxes to cover the job. Other EC members queried whether this was in his remit, the Standards in the Literature room are binding copies not Archives, box lids are broken and in some cases the Standards are just in brown paper packets.

MOTION 28 (Wigley and Johnson) "That the HOO be authorised to purchase 500 boxes with lids with a budget of £400 to box the loose Socialist Standards in the Literature Room" Carried 7-0-1. 1 absent.

iii) Campaigns Dept. 1) The department had obtained additional advertising in the Environment section of the Independent on the Thursday 27th for the half-day school. The EC are asked to retrospectively sanction this cost of £141. 2) Manchester Branch have requested the cost of the advertising for their half-day school be paid for from the funds of the Campaigns Dept. we recommend the EC so to do. 3) The Party Summer School is at the same time as Tolpuddle, there will be difficulty in getting material to the Comrades

in the South West. Comrade Johnson requests that he have permission to hire a van for 2 days.

4) The department is presently planning a meeting for the launch of the Ecology Pamphlet sometime in July.

iv) Premises Department. Comrade Comber continues to keep an eye on the building. Kingseal Windows have been contacted on more than one occasion to rectify the small leak where the light windows open in the Conservatory area. Comrade Stair will be visiting HO to undertake further Premises related work. The EC noted the letter.

v) E-mail from Comrade F.Allen, four points, 1) he has reported to the Treasurer and the EC. re: Party Funds. 2) he requests that the No Smoking Law at HO be reinforced. 3) Applies to fill the Library Committee vacancy and 4) requests full list of names and addresses of all party members for work as collector of dues and Library Committee member.

On the second point;

MOTION 29 (Deutz and Thomas) "That members be reminded that smoking is not allowed anywhere in the HO premises".

Comrade Miller doesn't agree that we should use a general ruling in the case of one person offending.

Amendment: (Millar and Thomas) "Delete 'members' and put 'HOO'".

Comrade Miller says this is a specific problem, no reason to act as if all the membership needed to be told. Comrade Thomas thought it might have more effect to name the person. Comrade Deutz opposed the amendment because we had two people named., Comrade Wigley also against because it's using a motion to reinforce a Party ruling. Comrade Miller said he was not getting at him for personal reasons but no sense in getting at the whole of the membership.

Voting on the amendment: Lost 2-6-1

A second amendment (Miller and White) "Replace with members who have smoked at HO". Lost 2-4

MOTION 30 (Wigley and Johnson) "That the question be put". Carried 7-0-2

On the original motion; Carried 7-0-2 (Comrades Miller and McEwan abstained.)

On point 3 the EC concluded that the Comrade needs to be nominated by a branch, two of which are meeting in the coming week. One felt that we shouldn't put obstacles in his way, others felt that as books had been out for years, a few more weeks wouldn't hurt.

On point four, Comrade Allen can ask a Party Officer for names and addresses of recalcitrant members. (See earlier discussion on access to Membership list).

vi) Motion from EARB (Stair and Allen) "That the report of the Ad-hoc Committee appointed by the EC to meet with Comrade P.Lancaster be placed on Spintcom as soon as possible". Carried 5-0

MOTION 31 (Thomas and Wigley) "That the Internet Dept. place the Lancaster Report on the files section of SPINTCOM".

Addendum (McEwan and Deutz) "And that a notice be put on Spintcom with the link to the file".

Addendum carried 7-0

Motion 31 with addendum Carried 7-0

vii) Letter from SWRB with a motion; "This branch holds that the legacies so generously given should be properly protected . At present £360.000 is in one or two accounts. As the Treasurer suggested, it should be spread

out into different banks, which each give protection up to £30,000 in case of bankruptcy. This branch urges the EC to take note of the Treasurer's concerns and act accordingly."

MOTION 32 (Wigley and McEwan) "That the Gen. Sec. answers in accordance with the facts. Agreed

viii) Letter from Comrade Ben Malcolm resigning from the Membership Committee, which he had hoped to serve on another year, pressure of family circumstances has acted against this.

MOTION 33 (Wigley and Deutz) "That Comrade Malcolm be thanked for his work". Agreed

ix) Central London Branch motion "Be it resolved that Central London Branch asks the EC to clarify which Branch Cde Bissett has joined."

Carried 6-0

They also noted that two of their resolutions from last month, namely that concerning the Treasurer's planned move, and that concerning Cde. Mwebaze do not appear to have been acted upon by the EC. They would like to have a response.

MOTION 34 (Buick and Wigley) "The General Secretary inform Central London Branch that Comrade Bissett was assigned to North East Branch". Carried 9-0

MOTION 35 (Buick and Wigley) "That Central London's resolution of the 29/2/08 re planned move by the Treasurer be noted". Carried 9-0

MOTION 36 (Johnson and Wigley) "That Central London Branch be referred to the resolution passed earlier in this meeting with reference to Comrades in Kabale" Agreed.

MOTION 37 (Miller and Buick) "That the Gen. Sec reply in accordance with the facts". Agreed.

10 Correspondence.

i) World Socialist Group (India) Minutes. World Socialist Party (India) Conference Report.

MOTION 38 (Deutz and Wigley) "That a copy of Binay Sarkar's letter of criticism of 2003 together with the EC reply be sent to the General Secretary of the WSG(I)". Carried 9-0

MOTION 39 (Miller and Deutz) "Send a copy of the 2003 reply to Binay Sarkar". Carried 9-0

ii) Fraternal greetings from Comrade Ron Elbert WSP(US) were received too late for the Conference.

iii) Audio Dept. report dated 28/1/08. (which seems to have been delayed in transit) Comrade Thomas made a request for £200 to digitalise Party tapes. Comrade Chesham has a Reel to Reel machine which should be up and running, if not possible may need to buy a new Reel to Reel. If work not done we are in danger of losing an important Party resource.

MOTION 40 (Wigley and White) "That the budget request be granted". Carried 9-0

11 Notice of Business

1. Miller: Resignation of Comrade Millar from the Internet Dept.

2. White: The situation of the people in India.

3. Miller: Replacement computer

4. Thomas: Removal of the Treasurer upstairs

Comrade Johnson elected Chair for the next meeting
Date of next meeting 3/5/08

The EC adjourned at 5.33pm

NOTICES

1. A call is hereby made for nominations for a vacancy on the Publications Department. Next EC Meeting is Saturday 3 May.
2. A call is hereby made for nominations for a Committee to advise the Treasurer on the placement of the Party's money.
2. Attached are the amendments to the model Branch Standing Orders proposed by the Ad Hoc Committee on Party Decision-making. Branches should send any comments to the Committee. [being sent in paper form to branches].