

# Minutes of the 11th Meeting of the 104th Executive Committee of the Socialist Party

6 October 2007

Note: These minutes are not official until amendment and adoption by the EC.

**Present:** Deutz, Browne (Chair), Miller (Assistant Secretary), Chesham, Helps, Stair, White

**Apologies:** Carter, Easton

**Visitors:** B Johnson, R Beat, J Lawrie, N Deutz, M Chesham, S Parker, G Thomas (Treasurer), L Stevens (non-member)

The meeting was called to order at 13:16.

1. Election of Chair

Agreed at previous meeting: Browne

2. Minutes of the previous meeting, business arising therefrom and the General Secretary's rising of Notices of Motion and Business from previous meetings

(a) Amendment of the 1 September 2007 meeting minutes

The meeting considered a letter from Carter (5 October) giving apologies for non-attendance and suggesting two amendments to the minutes.

**Motion 1** (*Chesham & Helps*) That in Motion 8 of the September 2007 minutes, "in which is" be replaced with "which has".

*Agreed*

**Motion 2** (*Chesham & Deutz*) That in Motion 13 of the September 2007 minutes, "is" be replaced with "as".

*Agreed*

**Motion 3** (*Chesham & Miller*) That in Motion 14 of the September 2007 minutes, "affirms" be replaced with "affirms".

*Agreed*

**Motion 4** (*Chesham & Miller*) That in §8(a) of the September 2007 minutes, "letters" be replaced with "communications".

*Agreed*

**Motion 5** (*Deutz & Stair*) That in Motion 28 of the September 2007 minutes, "6-0-2" be replaced with "6-0".

*Agreed*

White arrived around this point.

**Motion 6** (*Miller & Deutz*) That the September 2007 minutes be amended to reflect the fact that Motion 28 was discussed and carried after Deutz and Carter had left the meeting.

*Agreed*

**Motion 7** (*Deutz & Miller*) That in Motion 8 of the September 2007 minutes, “also” be deleted from the discussion.

*For: Deutz. Against: White, Chesham, Stair. Abstaining: Browne, Helps, Miller.*

*Failed 1–3–3*

**Motion 8** (*Miller & Deutz*) That in Motion 10 of the September 2007 minutes, “matter” be replaced with “manner”.

*Agreed*

**Motion 9** (*Deutz & Miller*) That in §4 of the September 2007 minutes, “None received” be replaced with “Committee vacant”.

*Agreed*

Stair said the EC spent too much time on trivial amendments.

(b) Adoption of the 1 September 2007 meeting minutes

**Motion 10** (*Helps & Stair*) That the September 2007 minutes be adopted as amended.

*Agreed*

(c) Matters arising from the 3 December 2005 meeting minutes

i. Re Motion 2.2.iii (review of arrangements regarding Miller’s visit)

Miller said that Cde P Lancaster had kindly drawn members’ attention to this 2005 resolution which had been irregularly enforced. Chesham asked what work Miller had actually done during his stay, with specific reference to the projects listed in the December 2005 minutes. Miller said that the digitisation of the *Standard* was underway, that the WSM website had been redesigned, that the SPGB website redesign was nearly done, that several publications had been (re)typeset and that several more were in the works, that he had worked closely with the Research Department to help them produce an electronic catalogue up until the departure of Bill Martin, and that in addition to all those projects he had served on the Executive Committee, Premises Committee, two ad-hoc Committees, and as Assistant Secretary.

Stair and White said the electronic library catalogue was not necessary and a waste of resources.

Stair and Chesham said it was useful to have Miller on the premises, particularly with technical matters. Chesham said there was a suggestion that Miller had cost the Party over £4500 and that this merited examination. Stair said Miller claimed very little and that the Party should pay him. Miller said he had not claimed anywhere near £4500.

**Motion 11** (*Helps & Stair*) That the EC thanks Tristan Miller for all the work he is doing for the Party and welcomes his continued stay at Head Office until the next review, and encourages him to claim the food allowance originally agreed.

*Carried 4–0–3*

Miller said he would leave whenever so requested but would appreciate some advance notice.

(d) Matters arising from the 3 February 2007 meeting

i. Re §3e of 3 February and §4a of 3 March and §8b of 1 September (payment to John Briggs for services re the Pooley Estate)

The meeting considered the following correspondence:

- Report from Assistant Secretary summarising EC discussions to date concerning the Pooley estate
- Letter from Treasurer to John Briggs (27 July) correcting a previous letter which asked when Briggs intended to charge the Party for his services
- Letter from John Briggs with attachments (17 September) invoicing the Party £1014.89 for his services and offering to provide a free report

Stair objected to the wording of the Assistant Secretary's report which he felt implied that he had been surveilling the Treasurer. Stair said that Cde D Lambert initially reported that Briggs, a friend of his, was carrying out the work as a favour, and that the Party never had a contract with Briggs; Lambert never informed the EC that the Party would be billed. Stair said that the Ad-hoc Committee and/or Treasurer had been advised not to contact Briggs to offer to pay, and that by writing the letter the Treasurer had simply opened the door for Briggs to charge the Party.

White recalled that Lambert said the first consultation would be free and that if there were any subsequent fees it would be discussed in advance. White said that we need to speak with Lambert about what had been authorised, but that we should pay the bill.

The Treasurer said he recalled that the first consultation would be free but subsequent ones would be charged, and that the minutes show that the EC had tacitly accepted that there was a contract with Briggs. The Treasurer admitted that the Ad-hoc Committee was in error in not producing a list of costs in advance, but noted that it had received no instruction to agree upon the costs in advance. The Treasurer said that on 30 September the EC instructed him to write to Briggs to enquire about costs. The Treasurer suggested that the EC should give their committees clearer instructions.

Browne said the EC acted quickly to ensure that the *Socialist Studies* group did not get the Pooley legacy, obtained a free consultation from Briggs, and instructed the Ad-hoc Committee to recover the legacy.

Helps said there was no other way out but to pay the bill and that the charge was low for a solicitor.

Deutz said it was inevitable that we would be charged and that there was no alternative but to pay.

**Motion 12** (*Helps & Deutz*) That the EC instructs the Treasurer to pay John Briggs, solicitor, for handling the estate of George Pooley.

*For: Browne, Deutz, Miller, Chesham, Helps. Against: None. Abstaining: White, Stair.*

*Carried 5–0–2*

Chesham asked whether there were any monies outstanding from the legacy. The Treasurer said that there were, but they probably amounted to no more than £5000. He said there was also the possibility of recovering Briggs's fee from the executors. White suggested the Ad-hoc Committee investigate recovery of the remainder of the monies. Stair said that the Treasurer should be instructed specifically.

**Motion 13** (*Miller & Chesham*) That the matter be deferred pending the report Briggs offered to provide for free in his 17 September letter.

*Agreed*

The Treasurer said that if the EC did not have confidence in him then it always had the option of delegating the matter someone else. Browne and Helps said he had their confidence. Chesham said the EC should ask Lambert for his comments, as his recollection was that Lambert had assured the Party that the solicitor would work at no charge.

**Motion 14** (*Chesham & Stair*) That the EC write to Lambert, informing him of the present state of affairs *vis-à-vis* the Pooley Estate, and asking him for his observations.

*Carried 5–0–2*

(e) Matters arising from the 2 June 2007 meeting

- i. Re Motion 18 of 2 June and Motion 7 of 1 September (speakers' classes): E-mail from Central Organiser (26 September) reporting that six members had expressed interest in attending, and two in teaching, and that education in knowledge of the Party case could be conducted online.

**Motion 15** (*Miller & Helps*) That the Central Organiser be asked to make the necessary arrangements for the speakers' classes and to report back on same.

*Carried 6–0–1*

(f) Matters arising from the 7 July 2007 meeting

- i. Re Motion 24 of 7 July (charge against Martin)

A. Resolution from East Anglian Regional Branch regarding Martin's defence circular (22 September):

That the East Anglian Regional Branch, having perused the document "My Reply to the Charge Against Me" by Comrade Martin, and in particular in respect of her statement in paragraph 3 on page 2 of that document, namely,

I admit to being confused on this issue and swinging from one position to another. As a socialist i know that a united ireland would be no solution for the workers there as it would have to be capitalist in a capitalist world. But then i sometimes think that as socialism could be a hundred years away it would be better for an oppressed peeps to have their own state even under capitalism cos this would at least free them from national oppression and with this out of the way make it easier for them to see that the real conflict is between capitalists and workers inside the nation not between different nations. [sic]

that this Branch is of the opinion that this statement overwhelmingly reflects Comrade Martin's ever-changing position towards the Party's case. (7–0)

Browne said this was new to him as he had not seen the charge against Martin or her defence circular.

**Motion 16** (*Miller & Deutz*) That East Anglian Regional Branch's resolution be noted.

*Agreed*

B. E-mail from Sandy Easton (1 October) offering to present the EC's case against Cde Martin at ADM.

**Motion 17** (*Miller & Stair*) Easton present the EC's case for the charge at ADM.

*For: Miller, Stair, White, Helps, Chesham. Against: None. Abstaining: Browne.*

*Carried 5–0–1*

Chesham asked who formulates the wording of the poll and what information is circulated therewith. Deutz said that the only thing that goes out after the ADM is the ADM report. Browne said that the EC cannot circulate any further information about the charge even before ADM. Chesham said that there has been an appalling lack of informed opinion regarding the charge. Chesham and Miller said that no rule disallows the EC from issuing further documents relating to the charge before ADM.

**Motion 18** (*Miller & Helps*) That the EC issue a reminder that no further circulation of arguments regarding the charge is permitted after ADM.

**Amendment** (*Chesham & Deutz*) Append “including on the Party’s e-mail lists”. Carried 5–0–2

Vote on motion as amended:

*Carried 6–0–1*

There ensued a discussion on how to implement this resolution, with suggestions that the all mailing list subscribers be put on moderation, or that the mailing lists be closed down entirely. In the absence of any instruction the implementation is left to the Internet Department.

- ii. Re Motion 26 of 7 July and Motion 10 of 1 September (image credits in the *Standard*). Agreed to defer.
- iii. Re Motion 33 (Campaigns Department posters): See §6b.
- iv. Re Motion 34 (Campaigns Department nominations)

The meeting considered an e-mail from Central London Branch nominating R Carr, V Clanchy, B Gardner, and C McCormack (14 September), and an e-mail from Gardner accepting the nomination (19 September)

**Motion 19** (*Chesham & Stair*) That B Gardner be appointed to the Campaigns Department.

*Agreed*

(g) Matters arising from the 4 August 2007 meeting

- i. Re Motion 19 (Library Department nominations)
  - A. Resolutions from East Anglian Regional Branch nominating N White and R Beat (22 September) and oral acceptances.

**Motion 20** (*Deutz & Browne*) That White and R Beat be appointed to the Library Department.

*Agreed*

- B. E-mail from West London Branch nominating S Wigley (29 September). Noted.

(h) Matters arising from the 1 September 2007 meeting

- i. Re §2(d)iii and Motion 8 (requisitions for a Party poll to reverse the charge against M Martin and to refer the matter to West London Branch)
  - A. Poll requisition from Swansea Branch (11 September): “That a Poll of the Party be called in accordance with Rule 26 to revoke Resolution 9 of the meeting of the EC of 4 August charging Comrade Martin [confirmation of Resolution 24 of the 7 July EC meeting] and to refer the matter to West London Branch. (4–1)”

**Motion 21** (*Miller & Chesham*) That Swansea Branch’s requisition be noted.

*Agreed*

- B. Resolution from East Anglian Regional Branch regarding the poll requisition (22 September):

That further to the East Anglian Regional Branch Resolution of 28 July 2007 supporting the Executive Committee’s position in the matter of the charge against Comrade Martin, the East Anglian Regional Branch’s view is that West London Branch should not deal with this matter given their frivolous statement dated 12 August 2007 addressed to the Executive Committee, namely,

Dear Comrades,

With reference to alleged infractions by Comrade Brady-Smith and EC resolutions arising therefrom (meetings of 24 June and 7 July), our member advises us that he is not now, and never has been, a member or supporter of the Komala (Communist Party of Iran) and does not recall ever uttering to Comrade Chesham words to the effect that “this is the way forward in this part of the world”. Before he relocated to Great Yarmouth, we referred him to the 1980 Conference resolution on the abusing of members by other members and recommended the local smoked herring.

Fraternally,  
Melvin Tenner  
Secretary

and their similarly worded statement to the Standing Orders Committee dated 26 August 2007, namely,

Since the banishment of smokers from Head Office last year there has been a feast of compensatory vices on the premises, real and alleged, including kava tasting and the smoking of reefers, drugs parties, unwelcome approaches to females, carnal hanky-panky, the viewing of pornographic websites, binge drinking, cock fights in the basement, and verbal and threatened physical abuse. Is it fair that the Head Office Organiser alone has responsibility for these recreational activities, and should we consider either evicting current residents or sharing the fun more widely among members? Alternatively, can the Premises Committee construct a bicycle shed in the backyard, behind which all naughty goings-on could be conducted simultaneously and unhindered?

(5-0-2)

Miller said that this resolution reprints a supporting statement which had been rejected by the Standing Orders Committee on the grounds that it would endanger the Party, and asked whether it should appear verbatim in the EC minutes. Deutz said it was not necessary to print the resolution in full. It was otherwise agreed that the resolution should appear as is.

Browne said the resolution does not concern the charge, that it improperly reproduces unpublished material, and that Branches should not attack each other for frivolous matters. Miller said there was no question of impropriety as all Party documents (save the membership list) are available to members.

**Motion 22** (*Chesham & Helps*) That East Anglian Regional Branch’s resolution be noted.

*Carried 5-0-2*

- C. E-mail from P Bennett (24 September) stating that as he had been provided with no evidence for the claims of canvassing and lobbying, this part of the resolution should be withdrawn and an apology offered to the two Branches.

**Motion 23** (*Chesham & White*) It should be blatantly obvious that the phrase to which Cde Bennett objects (“crude canvassing or outright lobbying”) referred to the two individuals conducting the straw polls in Birmingham and North East Branches. In the first instance, that individual was not the Branch secretary, and in the second that individual was not a member of the Party. Cde Bennett is again referred to the third and fourth sentences of Motion 8 of the 1 September 2007 EC meeting: “For socialists, democracy is much more than a mere counting of heads. Casting the vote comes at the conclusion of a process in which is seen the marshalling of facts and the presentation of opposing arguments with the decision being reached, hopefully, on the basis of informed opinion.”

**Amendment (Miller & Stair)** Change “was not a member of the Party” to “had resigned from the Party”. *Carried 5–0–2*

Chesham said that September’s Motion 8 was not meant to finger all the Branches’ members and that this clarifies things. Deutz spoke in opposition to the resolution and said the EC should apologise. Chesham replied that the motion simply clarified facts. He said that soliciting or offering votes as a personal favour or in deference to a longstanding member is deplorable, undemocratic behaviour of the worst kind. Browne and Miller said the motion was inflammatory.

**Amendment (Miller & Helps)** Delete “It should be blatantly obvious that”. *Carried 5–0–2*

Vote on motion as amended:

*For: Stair, Chesham, Helps, White, Miller. Against: Browne, Deutz. Abstaining: None.*

*Carried 5–2*

The Chair referred members to the standing order on questioning the socialist integrity of members. Chesham said that the Chair was not applying that resolution fairly. Stair apprised the Chair of comments made on the mailing list; he said that the EC was simply stating facts whereas some mailing list contributors were using *ad hominem* attacks.

- D. Letter from Ron Cook/Birmingham Branch (undated) saying that a recent decision to make Central Branch a closed Branch had effectively disenfranchise Birmingham Branch, but that the EC tacitly accepted the existence of the Branch (*e. g.*, by sending correspondence and allowing it to conduct the Summer School), and so must also accept their poll requisition.

Miller said he had sent a preliminary response to the letter. White and Chesham said that as neither Birmingham nor North East Branch had reported to Conference as per Rule 9 for several years, they could not be considered proper functioning branches. Deutz recalled a Conference discussion to wind up North East and Birmingham Branches and that this move was defeated because of the suggestion that they form regional branches. Browne and Miller said that it was impossible to know what happened as the former General Secretary had never submitted the Conference minutes. Browne said that he recalled Swansea had submitted but later withdrawn the motion. Stair said that the Branch proper does not run Summer School; rather it is a couple individual members, and the EC has been slack in permitting them to do this without any oversight.

**Motion 24 (Helps & Stair)** That Cde Cook’s letter be noted.

*Agreed*

- E. Report from the Assistant Secretary on the need for a protocol for online democratic decision-making.

Browne suggested that the applicability of this report to Birmingham Branch be raised under Any Other Business. Chesham asked if Cook had seen the report. Browne said that all members of the Branch were on e-mail so they must be able to see it. It was agreed to defer the matter.

- ii. Re Motion 13 (solicitation of support from members not present at Branch meetings)

- A. E-mail from Eva Goodman (12 September) explaining that she and Lambert were consulted by her Branch because they are fully informed, and stating that nominations need not be on Forms B and that Branches do not have accredited secretaries.

**Motion 25 (Stair & Miller)** That Cde Goodman’s e-mail be noted.

*For: Deutz, Stair, Miller, Helps, White. Against: Browne, Chesham. Abstaining: None.*

*Carried 5–2*

B. E-mail from West London Branch (29 September 17:01) with the following resolution:

This branch rejects the EC's description of the consultation of members who cannot routinely attend our meetings as 'totally unacceptable' [September EC minutes, page 6]. Furthermore, we regard the attempts by this EC to disregard the democratic decisions of members—of this and other branches—as improper and an abuse of the EC's role within the Party.

**Motion 26** (*Miller & Chesham*) That West London Branch be asked why they did not inform and consult all the other members not present at their meeting.

Deutz said that Goodman's letter answers this. Helps asked whether the Branch informs and consults only those members who wish to be informed and consulted. Deutz said members have some responsibility to keep themselves informed and participatory, and that Goodman is closely connected with the Branch secretary. Chesham said that none of this is a substitute for members attending in person to participate in Branch discussions, and that presently those who cannot or will not participate are unfortunately disenfranchised.

*Carried 5–1–1*

C. E-mail from Central Organiser with attachments (30 September)

Miller said that this was best considered together with the Assistant Secretary's report.

**Motion 27** (*Miller & Chesham*) That consideration of the Central Organiser's e-mail be deferred.

*Carried 3–1–3*

iii. Re Motion 16 (Form A for C. W.): Letter from David Porter, Membership Department (25 September)

**Motion 28** (*Miller & Browne*) That consideration of Cde Porter's letter be deferred.

*Agreed*

iv. Re Motion 18 (nominations for General Secretary)

The following nominations were received but not accepted by the nominees:

- E-mail from Central London Branch nominating M Tenner (14 September)
- East Anglian Regional Branch nomination of Miller (22 September)
- Letter from South London Branch nominating Carter and A Buick (6 October)

v. Re Motion 19 (nominations to Executive Committee): E-mail from Central London Branch nominating P Shannon, P McEwan, and H Roberts (14 September). None of the nominees accepted.

vi. Re Motion 22 (spurious SPGB meetings at Conway Hall): The Assistant Secretary reported that he had contacted Conway Hall and had received their assurance that they would not allow the meetings to be held in our name.

**Motion 29** (*Deutz & Browne*) That the Assistant Secretary's report be noted.

*Agreed*

vii. Re Motion 23 (Campaigns Department budget): E-mail from Campaigns Department (6 September). Also considered under this item was that part of this month's Campaigns Department report dealing with the proposed day school on mental health and capitalism.

Miller asked if the speakers or artists would be paid. Johnson (Campaigns Department) said that they would be reimbursed travel expenses from around Britain, and that £240

would be required for rental of stands for the artwork. Deutz asked why the Department thought lack of facilities for the disabled at Head Office was an issue, since the meeting concerned the mentally disabled, not the physically disabled. She also asked if the Department would consider an afternoon meeting rather than a day school. Miller said that as the art and poetry is neither part of a debate nor in furtherance of the Party case, it is simply an expensive decoration for the meeting. Stair reported that Johnson told him that the Department had requested two rooms because those interested in the art will not be interested in our politics. Stair said that this isn't what the Party is about; we put on meetings for politics, not for art. White asked why this London-based event is under the remit of the Department instead of one of the London branches. Johnson said that it is because it was already on the agenda before the departure of Bissett and suspension of Martin. White said no buffet was needed.

**Motion 30** (*Miller & White*) That the Campaigns Department be authorised to hold their capitalism and mental health meeting at Head Office and that advertising expenses and travelling expenses for speakers be granted, but that no other expenses be granted.

**Amendment** (*Stair & Helps*) Replace "at Head Office and that advertising expenses and" with "at Head Office, that a combined budget of £150 pounds for advertising and food be granted, and that" *Carried 6-1*

Vote on motion as amended:

*Carried 6-1*

viii. Re Motion 27 (roof hatch security): Oral report from Premises Committee. Agreed to defer.

ix. Re Motion 29 (payments to Zambia): E-mail from Central Branch Secretary (6 September) asking where the EC thought the monies came from. Agreed to note.

(i) Notices of Motion and Business

- None received.

### 3. Forms A and F

(a) Form A for J. S. from the Acting Secretary of Birmingham Branch, which had been accepted by telephone and mail.

Miller noted that this application put the EC in the same position as with the Birmingham poll requisition, and asked whether the application should be referred to the Membership Department. Chesham said that the application wasn't properly conducted, but that referring the application to the Membership Department will only confuse the applicant. Chesham said that the Party needs to urgently sort out the problem of Branches which do not meet. Stair said that the Party cannot entrust a single member with the task of processing Forms A, and that he was worried about a repeat of the C. W. application. Miller said that the EC did not know how many members oversaw the application.

**Motion 31** (*Deutz & Miller*) That J. S.'s application be referred back to the Acting Secretary of Birmingham Branch to request information on the application process (*e.g.*, whether a membership questionnaire was carried out).

*Carried 6-0-1*

**Motion 32** (*White & Stair*) That the EC write to J. S. apologising for the delay in processing his application.

Chesham questioned whether the motion should provide further information. Deutz noted that we don't have further details. Stair said that we already know what the problem is: new members applying to a Branch should be accepted only at quorate meetings, as per Rule 1.

*Carried 7-0*

(b) Form F for James Keohane (Central Branch, deceased)

**Motion 33** (*Deutz & Miller*) That Cde Keohan's Form F be accepted.

*Agreed*

4. Written report of the General Purposes Committee

- Committee vacant.

5. Accounts

(a) Accounts for April–June 2007. Agreed to defer.

6. Reports of Party Officers, Party Appointees, Subcommittees, and Departments; discussion of campaigns and *The Socialist Standard*

(a) Report from the Assistant Secretary

**Motion 34** (*Miller & Deutz*) That the Assistant Secretary's report be deferred.

*Failed 2–5*

The report noted that the monitor for the Head Office window display had been returned and that the manufacturer's technicians now believe the fault to lie with our video card rather than with the monitor. Meanwhile the display is still usable and had been reinstalled.

Stair said the monitor is difficult to see in the sunlight or from an angle. He said it would be better to have the window unobstructed so that the public can see the activity in the building. Miller said that the display had generated several enquiries from passersby, that it was highly visible in the mornings and evenings and at night, and that passersby would be able to see into the building once the façade was unbricked and more windows installed.

**Motion 35** (*Chesham & Stair*) That the Assistant Secretary be instructed to purchase a new video card on Monday to determine the problem with the display.

*Carried 5–0–2*

(b) Report from the Campaigns Department (August 2007). Agreed to defer.

(c) Report from the Campaigns Department (September 2007) Agreed to defer.

(d) Oral report from the Standing Orders Committee. Agreed to defer.

(e) Autumn Delegate Meeting

It was agreed that arrangements for the ADM social would be discussed at beginning of ADM.

The meeting received the following reports:

- Report from the Assistant Secretary
- Report from the Central Branch Secretary
- Report from the Ad-hoc Committee Investigating the Circumstances Surrounding the Estate of the Late George Pooley
- Report from the Archives Department
- Report from the Central Organiser

No report had been received from the Ad-hoc Committee to Construct Alternative Models of Party Decision-Making, the Blog Department, and the Central Branch Organiser.

**Motion 36** (*Deutz & Chesham*) That all outstanding ADM reports be adopted.

Several members objected to certain claims or omissions from the Archives Department report.

**Amendment** (*Miller & Deutz*) Insert "except the Archives Department report" after "all outstanding ADM reports". *Carried 5–0–2*

Vote on motion as amended:

*Carried 7-0*

**Motion 37** (*Chesham & Miller*) That the meeting be adjourned.

*Agreed*

With several items remaining on the agenda, the meeting was adjourned at 18:41.