

Socialist Workers Party

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Stop the War demonstration in Trafalgar square 19/3/05 Pic: Jess Hurd

Building the SWP in the age of mass movements ● Imperialism and the anti-war movement ● The crisis of labourism and the building of Respect ● Neo-liberalism in the age of Bush and Blair ● International perspectives ● Industrial perspectives ● Fighting racism today ● We need to gamble on student work ● National Committee – a proposal ● Money money money – this year's subs drive ● Proposal for the *Socialist Worker* monthly magazine ● SWP Central Committee election results ● Security

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Dear comrade,

Welcome to the SWP post conference bulletin. This document outlines the decisions (commissions) and results of the CC election that took place at our conference in January.

After each session at conference a small group of delegates wrote a commission summarising the key points of the debate. These commissions were then voted on at conference. If there was a difference of opinion, an alternative could be written and voted on.

These commissions are printed below. Also there were three proposals put to conference – about the National Committee, finance, and *Socialist Review*. The proposals that were carried can also be found in this bulletin.

yours,

**Martin Smith,
SWP National Organiser**

BUILDING THE SWP IN THE AGE OF THE MASS MOVEMENTS

1. 2006 will be an important year for the movement and the SWP.

- Just eight months after his “historic” third election victory Blair is on his last legs, the Lib Dems are tearing themselves apart, and the Tories are being forced to move into the middle ground.
- In America Bush’s poll standing is at a record low and his administration continues to be rocked by the Lewis Libby affair.
- The key factor in politics today, nationally and internationally, is resistance and opposition to the occupation of Iraq.
- Desperate for his legacy not to be marked by his failure in Iraq, Blair is attempting to carry through a range of “modernising” counter reforms in education, health, pensions, housing and other public services. This continues to create new levels of resistance, both in terms of direct struggles and

campaigns, and the possibility of a political alternative to Labour.

2. Building the anti war movement remains the key task for the SWP. The inspiring breadth of the Peace Conference on 10 December demonstrated the vitality of the movement. Building the demonstration on 18 March for the third anniversary of the start of the war is our top priority.

3. Blair’s attacks are also creating the possibility of building effective campaigns against his neo-liberal agenda. Where these are organised properly significant victories can be won. The successes of Defend Council Housing are one example, campaigns against academy schools and health cuts another.

4. The increasing tendency for all three mainstream parties to fight over a narrow “middle ground” opens up real possibilities for Respect to build on the groundbreaking successes at the General Election. We have to use May’s local council elections to widen our base of support.

5. Whilst the level of class struggle remains at a low level we see real possibilities there. Only a partial climbdown by Blair and hesitation by trade union leaders prevented joint strike action over pensions on the biggest scale since the general strike.

With local government pensions still under threat that fight is not over yet. The possibility of a breakthrough at Gate Gourmet was held back by the

unwillingness of T&G officials to confront anti union laws and the Blair government. As we write tube workers in London are preparing for a major battle as Ken Livingstone signs up to a project to undermine the RMT.

6. The SWP has always started from the needs of the working class and the movement. We have played a key role in shaping the Stop the War Coalition, Respect, and other united campaigns.

- There is no contradiction between building the movement and building the SWP. Where SWP organisation is strong we are better able to help the movement. Where we are active in the movement we are able to create a better-rooted SWP.

- But we have paid some price for pushing out into the movement. To some degree our internal party structures were weakened. In the last year we have been addressing this with a series of highly successful rallies and Marxist forums.

Where districts and branches adopt this approach we have been able to create branches that are interesting places to come to and which deal with the real questions raised by the movement. This has also produced real results in recruitment, including leading trade unionists, and key figures in campaigns.

7. Socialist Worker is an indispensable tool, for agitating, for taking up arguments in the movement, and for bringing people toward the SWP. Socialist Worker

is held in high esteem throughout the movement but we need to expand its sales.

Of course increasing the number of active members and branches will do this. But we also need to ensure that individual comrades sell it at work and in every campaign in which we are involved and we need to increase the sale outside workplaces. There is a growing trend for those who join the party to already be subscribers to Socialist Worker.

8. One of the most exciting developments in the last year has been the recruitment amongst students and young people.

We are starting to see the generation of school students who walked out against the war in our colleges and active politically. These new members can help transform our branches and districts. They are the future of the party.

IMPERIALISM AND THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

No issue has dominated international and domestic politics more than the Iraq war and its aftermath.

In the 2005 general election Labour lost a million votes over Iraq, securing little over 20 percent support from the electorate.

Tony Blair and Charles Clarke's attempt to drive through further repressive anti-terror legislation suffered a significant defeat, the first this government has faced since coming to office.

The British public saw through Blair's attempts to scapegoat Muslims for the 7 July bombings with up to 85 percent of people connecting the attacks with Blair's war in Iraq.

The occupation of Iraq is a disaster for both its engineers and its victims, producing a broad-based resistance to imperialism in the country. The vast majority of the Iraqi people support immediate withdrawal of coalition forces, as do the British and the American people.

The work of the Stop the War Coalition has been essential in mobilising the biggest mass movement in British history and keeping Iraq at the centre of British politics. Key to its success has been the broad, inclusive nature of the coalition, encompassing support from all

the major trade unions, Military Families Against War, peace activists and Muslims.

On a global level, the anti-war movement is experiencing significant revitalisation. This is most evident from the spectacular rebirth of the American anti-war movement, galvanised by Cindy Sheehan's summer protest outside George Bush's Texas ranch.

The vitality and energy of the global anti-war movement was evident at the International Peace Conference when over 1,200 delegates from around the world gathered in London to discuss resistance to the war in Iraq, the occupation of Palestine and any future US military adventures. The conference issued a call for a global day of demonstration on 18/19 March, the third anniversary of the beginning of the war.

This conference resolves:

- 1) To build or rebuild broad anti-war groups in our localities, colleges and workplaces.
- 2) To report back to our local anti-war groups on the success of the International Peace Conference.
- 3) To promote and build the 18 March demonstration, emphasising the importance of the movement remaining vocal and visible.
- 4) To support the statement issued by Tony Benn to hold Bush and Blair to account for war crimes.
- 5) To pass motions through trade union and student union branches securing support and sponsorship for the 18 March demonstration.

THE CRISIS OF LABOURISM AND THE BUILDING OF RESPECT

1. The continuing occupation of Iraq is creating immense political problems for New Labour. The global assault of neo-liberalism is attempting to undermine welfare services and workers' rights.

These processes have opened up a space for the growth of Respect as a radical force to the left of Labour. This is part of the general crisis of social democracy that can be seen, for example, with the growth of the Left Bloc in Portugal, Linkspartei in Germany and PSOL in Brazil.

2. In the last two years Respect has achieved some remarkable results, starting with the European elections, winning seats at local government level, and the astonishing result for George Galloway in Tower Hamlets.

The breakthrough at the May election allowed us to establish a bridgehead in the electoral field. But it is now necessary for Respect to develop and expand on this beginning.

The next target for Respect is the May local elections. It is essential that we come out of these elections with more councillors and deeper roots across the country.

3. The success last May was based on a strategy of targeting our resources on seats where we could win or get good results.

This strategy was vindicated by the election outcome. This May at the local elections similar considerations need to be taken into account. There is an immense temptation to stand everywhere against New Labour – but this would be a mistake. We must target those seats and those areas where we expect to win.

4. Our priority is putting party resources into those areas where we can win. This may mean party members travelling to campaign in neighbouring wards, boroughs or towns – and encouraging Respect members in their area to do likewise.

For this to be successful it is important that we establish good, vibrant Respect groups everywhere – even in those areas where we do not intend to stand this year. Respect must become a political home for those breaking with Labour, coming out of the anti-war movement, radicalising elements from within the Muslim community, local networks, etc.

We do this by being imaginative, which means holding regular Respect meetings, but also cultural events, film shows, meals and other activities.

5. Respect has had a spectacular impact in the universities this year. 700 students attended a rally at Leeds university and 500 at Exeter – with hundreds joining.

This is the future of Respect. It is important that Respect continues to grow on campuses across the country. This army of student Respect members needs to be given a full and active role within Respect and will be an invaluable resource in the election campaigns in May this year.

6. The main political issue in Britain remains the war and occupation of Iraq. This therefore means that every Respect

group must throw itself into building the demonstration on March 18 and be seen to be the champions in their area of defending civil liberties and other manifestations of the war on terror.

Equally important is confronting the social consequences of neo-liberalism. Respect must be involved in resisting attacks on the welfare state – housing, the NHS, comprehensive education – and this means networking with campaigns to defend these and other local campaigns.

Finally, we must develop roots and become the recognised local leaders – ‘community shop stewards’ – prepared to take up any issues which have a detrimental impact on local working class communities.

7. The SWP has always been central to the political development of Respect. We have a duty to lead politically within the movement, fighting for unity but not afraid to take on difficult arguments in a fraternal manner.

For example over the question of the Religious Hatred Bill – despite its limitations – we had to argue that Respect support the bill.

In the present climate Islamophobia is one of the main forms that racism takes. Not to support a bill that gives Muslims the same protection in law as that which is offered to Jews and Sikhs would line us up with the political right, racists and Islamophobes.

Similar considerations apply to the question of faith schools. Although we are committed to a fully comprehensive education system in which all faiths are equally recognised, we have no truck with the abstract secularists on the left who argue against Muslim schools on the basis of an ‘anti-religious’ perspective.

The majority of faith schools in Britain are Christian. Catholics and Protestants have their own faith schools. Muslims should have the same right. In order for comrades to be able to argue these often difficult questions it is essential that we caucus before meetings. Caucusing is also a key method of developing new party members.

NEO-LIBERALISM IN THE AGE OF BUSH AND BLAIR

The world today is characterised by growing inter-imperialist tensions as the globalisation of capital increases economic competition, and by the relentless neo-liberal offensive against the social gains won by working people in the period after 1945.

Within the European Union this takes the form of a ‘race to the bottom’ where each EU member state competes in attacking welfare and social provision.

So the attack on pensions and the efforts to increase the retirement age are not confined to Britain but represent a cross-EU attack on our rights. Similarly the Services Agreement (or Bolkestein Agreement) will lead to a downward thrust on wage rates and employment conditions across the EU.

The SWP is against the EU on the basis that it represents a neo-liberal alliance. But we join with the radical left across Europe in campaigning for the best employment rights and social provisions available from within the EU.

Here we will strive to build a fightback against the efforts to increase the retirement age and to reduce our pension entitlement. In the short term this particularly affects local government workers.

We will also build support for the European TUC demonstration in Strasbourg on 14 February against the EU Services Agreement.

The relentless neo-liberal drive and the heightened economic competition facing European capital mean there will be further attacks which will also spark resistance, as we have seen in recent days on London Underground.

The strikes and demonstrations against neo-liberalism, coupled with the centre left’s acceptance of that agenda, has given rise to a radical left across Europe. But those strikes and protests have not led to a breakthrough on the scale of May 1968. In particular economic resistance lags behind the political and ideological radicalisation.

The SWP stresses the centrality and importance of the anti-war movement and Respect. But we need to address how those forces can organise to rebuild working class organisation. In that we stress the primacy of politics by building

Stop the War and Respect in the workplaces and working class communities.

We need to develop that further to forge the political rank and file forces that we have helped foster on London Underground, in the post office and in the civil service.

Involvement in Stop the War and Respect, ideological debate and awareness of the global resistance to neo-liberalism boosts workplace confidence. Internationalism (participation in the WSF, ESF and events like the ETUC 14 February demo) also aids the rebuilding of confidence. Neo-liberalism impacts too into the work process, feeding ideological debate over how we are expected to provide care and education.

One way that can be achieved is by local and student branches selling *Socialist Worker* and the pensions pamphlet outside local workplaces and by creating a campaigning presence there.

In the short term we should campaign for a national workday demonstration against pension ‘reform’ using the Irish Ferries dispute to highlight what is possible.

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

1. Resistance to neo-liberalism and imperial war continues unabated. This is best seen as developing along four dimensions:

(i) In Latin America the scale of mass resistance has reached its highest extent. In 2005 popular risings in Bolivia and Ecuador repeated the earlier feat (respectively in 2003 and 2000) of overthrowing a neo-liberal president.

The level of self-organisation displayed by the popular movements, particularly in El Alto, the city of the poor above La Paz, that secured the overthrow of President Carlos Mesa in Bolivia in June 2005, and the main demand of that struggle – the renationalisation of hydrocarbon reserves sold off to foreign multinationals – represented a deepening level of radicalisation.

At the same time, as his presence at the both the World Social Forum in Brazil in January and at the protests during George W. Bush’s visit to Argentina for the Summit of the Americas in November showed, President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela has succeeded in projecting himself as the symbol of the

Latin American movements' defiance of American imperialism.

(ii) But, if the movements are most advanced in Latin America, the most important front in the struggle against US imperialism is in Iraq.

The resistance, even if actively supported by only a minority of the population (though a large majority oppose the occupation), has nevertheless consistently demonstrated the capacity to deny to the US and its allies and clients sufficient control over the territory of Iraq to establish a stable regime.

This is causing an increasingly serious domestic political crisis for the Bush administration, which is now facing increasingly pressing calls for the withdrawal or 'draw-down' of US troops. But the Iraqi resistance has also, by concentrating US attention and military capabilities on Iraq, created a breathing space for resistance movements elsewhere in the world, most notably in Latin America.

(iii) The grip of social liberalism – the wing of social democracy symbolised by Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, Gerhard Schröder, and Lula that has embraced neo-liberalism – on the traditional workers' movement is now producing a political crisis that is providing in many countries opportunities for the radical left to become the focus of larger political realignments.

The most important illustrations of this are the victory of the left 'No' in the French referendum on the European Constitution in May – the result of a split in the Socialist Party (PS) and the united front forged by the Communist Party (PCF) and the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) – and the spectacular performance of the Linkspartei in the German federal elections in September.

But there are other important signs of the same process elsewhere – Respect's impressive performance in the British general election, the advances made by the Portuguese Left Bloc and the Danish Red-Green Alliance in their national polls, and the influx of ex-members of the Brazilian Workers Party disillusioned by Lula's version of social liberalism into the new Party of Socialism and Liberty (P-SOL).

(iv) The diffuse intellectual radicalisation associated with the initial phases of the anti-capitalist movement after Seattle six years ago has also undergone a deepening process.

Autonomism, initially almost hegemonic, though still influential (especially around John Holloway's ideas in Latin America), is now much more under challenge. This is mainly because of the return of the political (see para 2 below).

Thus the Zapatistas in Mexico have abandoned their tacit alliance with the

left-nationalist PRD and have launched 'another campaign' to intervene in next year's presidential elections. The Italian disobbedienti have split over whether the radical left should join the government if the centre left win next April's parliamentary elections (see para 4 below).

The weakening of autonomism has created a space in which more genuinely radical ideas can flourish. One influential intellectual current is most powerfully articulated by Noam Chomsky – anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, in favour of mass politics, but hostile to any party-building project.

But harder-edged Marxist ideas are also finding an audience among a new generation of activists – for example, at the Kapitalismus Reloaded conference in Berlin in November, whose opening session was attended by 700-800 mainly young people.

POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

2. When the present wave of resistance began with the protests at Seattle and Genoa, the dominant ideology within the new movements was hostile to political parties on the grounds that 'autonomous' social movements were sufficient to combat neo-liberal capitalism.

But the real logic of the development of the movements has been in quite the opposite direction: the more they intervene in the political field the harder it is to evade the issues of political representation and organisation.

Stathis Kouvelakis in the present issue of *International Socialism* describes the French referendum as 'the triumph of the political': left parties and their militants played a critical role in the No campaign.

The danger in seeking to evade the political is evident in the damaging evolution of the European Social Forum, where the dominant forces, in seeking to make the ESF 'process' a substitute for the political generalisation in which parties (excluded as a matter of principle from the Social Forums) play a necessary part, have increasingly turned in on themselves, threatening the future of the ESF.

RADICAL LEFT

3. The return of the political is finding expression in the emergence of new political formations of the radical left. Respect, the Linkspartei, the Left Bloc, and P-SOL are broad parties that bring together political forces with quite diverse political backgrounds and whose programmes leave open key strategic issues such as reform and revolution.

This relatively loose and open party form fits the needs of the present situation. The intersection of resistance to neo-liberalism with the long-term crisis of social democracy is beginning to shake loose significant elements from the parties of the Second International.

It is essential that the new parties are sufficiently open politically and organisationally to be habitable for refugees from social democracy. Simply to counterpose the abstract necessity of a mass revolutionary party to the ugly reality of social liberalism would be to throw aside a historic opportunity to reconstruct the left on the basis of opposition to neo-liberalism and imperialism.

It is also a mistake to argue, as some of the revolutionary left do, that these formations should convert themselves into 'parties' based on the traditional model of far left organisation – with their own papers, unitary membership rather than the quasi-federal structure adopted by Respect, etc.

Underlying these demands is the idea that what the new parties are about is regrouping the existing far left rather than acting as the focus of a much larger political realignment that draws in new forces. This may help to explain why the main organisation to have adopted the far left model – the Scottish Socialist Party – has undergone a deep crisis over the past year.

THE PROBLEM

4. There is, however, no inevitable historic logic that means that rebellions against neo-liberalism will automatically lead to political breaks with social liberalism.

The most important party of the radical left in Europe is the Partito della Rifondazione Comunista, which at the time of the Genoa protests in July 2001 identified itself, apparently decisively, with the anti-capitalist movement.

Unfortunately, the PRC Congress in March voted to support the policy of its general secretary, Fausto Bertinotti, to join the centre-left union led by Romano Prodi.

This means that, if the centre left win the Italian parliamentary elections next April (and they are currently ahead in the opinion polls), Rifondazione could find itself participating in a social-liberal government. This would turn the victory that the electoral defeat of Berlusconi would mean into yet another bitter tale of the failure of reformism.

The very political and social diversity that makes the new parties living formations also means that serious disagreements about key strategic issues can develop within them. It is therefore

essential to continue building independent and organised revolutionary Marxist currents within the new left parties.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LEFT

5. This underlines that revolutionary Marxist organisations have a special responsibility in promoting the process of left realignment. Their political clarity and organisational cohesion should allow them to play a strategic role in the development of new parties of the radical left that genuinely break with social liberalism.

Thus the SWP, together with the important partners it developed in the anti-war movement, has been a main driving force in the development of Respect.

Our comrades in Linksruck in Germany and in Revolutas in Brazil have, within the limitations imposed by the smaller size and resources, played an active part in the development of, respectively, the Linkspartei and P-SOL.

The two far left organisations that founded the Left Bloc – the Portuguese section of the Fourth International and the Maoist UDP – have been central to the emergence of the Bloc as one of the most important forces on the radical left in Europe.

The situation in France after the referendum, with the network of unitary No committees throughout the country bringing together militants of all the main left organisations (apart from Lutte Ouvrière) and of the social movements, offers particularly exciting possibilities of regroupment.

Unfortunately, the majority in the LCR, confronted with the real difficulties involved in weaning the PCF away from its search for a new alliance with the PS, has preferred to adopt a passive and cautious attitude that puts first the conditions the Ligue demands for an agreement with the PCF rather than mounting an active campaign to achieve the widest possible unity on the left.

This wait-and-see attitude is encouraged by the enthusiasm of the right-wing minority for a political realignment that would lead to the liquidation of the Ligue. But, as the LCR comrades showed when they ran Olivier Besançon for president in 2002, it is impossible to make real gains without taking political risks.

5. This situation puts very big demands on us. Thus in Britain SWP members have to engage in three concentric circles of activity – building the mass united fronts that constitute the movements (above all the Stop the War Coalition), building Respect as the broad political alternative that has emerged from these movements, and building the SWP as the kernel of

organised revolutionary militants that can drive these larger formations forward.

As we have said, comrades (both inside and outside the IST) are engaged in a similar set of tasks elsewhere. Pursuing this approach is very demanding and sometimes we get it wrong.

Most obviously, in the recent past we tended to neglect specifically SWP party building work because of the priority we rightly gave to the movements. This is an imbalance that, as other conference documents show, we have started to correct.

But other IST organisations have faced similar problems – not surprisingly, since neglect of one (or more) of the concentric circles is a risk inherent in the present situation.

Of course, concrete possibilities differ from country to country. For example – as in Greece – the existing constellation of left parties may block any big organisational realignment or breakthrough or – as in the United States – the left may be polarised between the gravitational pull of a bourgeois party (the Democrats) and a variety of sects.

Nevertheless, the political method outlined here – starting with the movements, seeking the openings to develop a stronger radical left, and building revolutionary organisation as a precondition for successfully addressing these other tasks – is of quite general significance.

FRANCE

6. The complexity of the present situation is indicated by the variety of forms of resistance to neo-liberalism. The recent riots in the working-class suburbs of France were a rebellion against neo-liberalism – a massive outburst of defiance against decades of unemployment, racism, and urban decay.

Any revolutionary worth his or her salt would side with the riots. But even such spontaneous and violent movements can be dealt with by the capitalist state, through a combination of repression and incorporation.

One condition of the success of such strategies is the political isolation of such rebellions from the workers' movement: the PS was hostile to the riots and the PCF at best equivocal. These dangers underline the importance of building political alternatives that can help the voiceless find a voice and direct their anger towards breaking the system that oppresses them.

INDUSTRIAL PERSPECTIVES

The Labour government in its third term has begun with a stepping up of the neo-liberal privatisation agenda and a major assault on workers in the shape of pensions reform. There is almost universal opposition to these attacks across the working class but the response thus far is shaped by the experience of the last 20 years as well as the anger and disaffection from Labour that people feel.

The campaign around pensions thus far bears this out.

The government's partial retreat on public sector pensions was due to their unwillingness to take on over 2 million workers in what would have been the biggest strike since 1926.

This was matched by the pessimism of the union leaders that we could smash Labour's plans in their entirety – and their unwillingness to deliver a body blow to "our party". Many ordinary workers' unease at the deal's giving away of pension rights for future generations without even a fight was not equalled in confidence that we can fight for more.

Some bosses and sections of New Labour have taken this as a sign that they can take their attack much further – hence Turner's proposals raising the spectre of a state pension at 69 for workers currently in their 20s. Whether they have gone too far will depend on the resistance to them that can be built from the rank and file – building that resistance should be a central focus for revolutionaries in the coming months.

The desire for unity across workers shown by the massive yes votes for action in the Spring – ranging from 67% in the PCS to 86% in UCATT and AMICUS – should be combined with attacking the neo-liberal agenda for the unbridled capitalism that it is. The contrast of what is happening to our pensions compared to the pensions of the rich taps into the anger. The slogan "Don't let them steal our pensions" captures both the them and us of the situation and the sense that the capitalist class is out to rob us all.

After all, the sense of neo-liberalism out of control and the 'them and us' is what brought important disputes into the wider movement this year.

The Gate Gourmet dispute had many similarities to the little remembered Sky Chefs in 1998. Yet the solidarity strikes by BA workers, the Michael Moore-like

conflict of the hundreds of largely Asian women pitted against the might of a vast US corporation and the sense of injustice at Blair's Britain combined to give it a significance that can not be imagined by those who look at industrial conflict solely through the prism of strike days lost.

The £20,000 collected in the two weeks of unofficial action to defend the convenor of Rolls Royce, Jerry Hicks, also showed this spirit of workers supporting those who stand up against injustice.

The UNISON strikes to stop the victimisation of key activists in Sefton arose from the anger of workers that the council were using the sackings to stop the union campaigning over the sale of council housing.

The defeat of each of these disputes was not the result of workers' reluctance to take action—both Rolls Royce and Gate Gourmet saw unofficial action, for example. Rather, the ties to a strategy of lobbying rather than confronting New Labour mean union leaders are unwilling or unable to take the steps necessary to secure victory. Winning in Sefton meant challenging Labour's support for council housing sell offs; the other disputes meant breaking the anti-union laws Labour has kept in place.

Thus the question of building politically in the workplace remains central to our perspectives.

The movement against the war in Iraq, the massive G8 protests and the fight against the BNP feed both workers' desire for another world and a better life for themselves. Anger at New Labour over Iraq deepens the anger of millions over privatisation, low pay and the proposed dismantling of the welfare state.

Above all, the role that the war in Iraq has played in millions of workers breaking with Labour frames the growing opposition to the domestic agenda. Every union conference showed the hardening of this opposition into a "Blair must go" sentiment, even in the conferences that took place just before or just after the election.

The T&G vote to call for "immediate" rather than the "speedy" withdrawal favoured by the leadership was all the more remarkable given that it took place a week after 7/7 and days after the driver of the number 30 bus was hailed at the conference. The mood to close the Northern line by RMT members refusing to drive dangerous trains was fuelled by the anger at Livingstone's use of the "Seven Million Londoners, One London" campaign to blackmail tube workers into carrying on as normal after 7/7, no matter how unsafe.

Yet, as most clearly illustrated by again keeping Iraq out of Labour Party conference, the union leaders' opposition does not generally match up to that of

their members – it is crucially tempered by their refusal to break with Labour as "our party".

The "awkward squad" is a shadow of itself. Its members—whose track record on the Stop the War Coalition, the ESF and Unite against Fascism— is impeccable have lost their title because many of them failed to confront the government on the war, privatisation, health, education, the anti-union laws and low pay.

The CWU campaign against privatisation and deregulation shows this well. It was given much impetus by a 450 strong meeting organised by London and Yorkshire branches alongside *Post Worker*.

The reluctance of the national union to take such initiatives to launch the campaign against any kind of sell off was explicable once the meeting took place—the central issue was breaking the link with Labour, which the leadership has opposed consistently.

Thus the campaign has seen a relatively small lobby of parliament rather than a national demonstration against privatisation, and low-key regional meetings rather than rallies built amongst different layers of workers.

Where an issue connects with the wider political issues, especially Blair's neo-liberal agenda, we have seen important battles by groups of workers. In the months following Gate Gourmet, outsourcing has re-emerged in workplaces as diverse as United Bakeries in Birmingham and the London Underground. Civil service workers have begun to take action against Brown's jobs massacre and privatisation.

After years of deregulation and weakening union organisation, there have been strong and successful sustained strikes on the buses in the past four months over pay – with the solidarity of Polish and British workers in Staffordshire an indicator of the need to deal with wider political questions such as racism in order to win unity amongst workers.

In education, there have been notable victories on City Academies where campaigns have united parents, teachers and pupils. Those that have secured victories, such as those led by SWP members in Darlington, Islington and Lambeth, have been campaigns that tapped into the political mood – Darlington focused on local MP Tony Blair and Islington took teachers dressed as fat cats to the offices of the real thing.

The Keep Our NHS Public meetings, lobbies and demonstrations have pulled together networks of health workers precisely because it has been pitched at the big idea of defending a cornerstone of post-war social democracy. This has meant new networks emerging out of the meet-

ings of 60 or 70 health activists in Liverpool, Bristol, Tower Hamlets, Cambridge etc – in the process helping drive a wedge between New Labour and workers.

These types of activities cannot be seen by our members as "add ons" to the work of building the confidence of workers to fight – rather they are a key mechanism to engaging workers in struggle.

Thus, the process of setting up meetings and forums around "Tell It Like It Is", on the failure of the education system for black and Asian students, is galvanising a layer of teachers in schools and FEs who are not the traditional activists we have looked to.

All this means the opportunities for the building of independent rank and file organisation and a political alternative in the unions are growing – we have to ensure that the big issues that motivate people are the frames for our intervention in the workplace and union branches.

Everywhere we have raised the International Peace Conference we have met enthusiasm – a solid network of trade unionists from each area at the conference will pay dividends in months to come. The 450 at Respect's Unison conference fringe meeting and the 250 at both PCS and CWU were the key fringe events at those conferences. The TUC fringe meetings had more delegates from the manual unions – AMICUS, T&G – than in previous years.

The development of rank and file organisation inside the unions is vital to maintain links between those who haven't yet broken with Labour or focus simply on militant trade unionism.

The sale of nearly 1,000 *Across the Tracks* played a central role in shaping the response of RMT activists to the London bombs – clearly linking Iraq and the growth of terrorism to Blair strengthened the argument for the troops to come home and for action on tube safety.

The *Post Worker* special on privatisation has been a key vehicle for carrying the arguments about the government's manoeuvrings to over 7,000 readers – and an organising tool to boost rank and file involvement in the campaign.

As we have argued about every aspect of the SWP's intervention in the movement, industrial work should not be left simply to comrades who have union positions or are rooted in a particular workplace.

The need for party structures to shape our strategy and intervention is as important here as everywhere.

This is especially true when it comes to recruitment of people we work alongside to the SWP – understandably, we often find it hardest to ask our closest political allies ourselves. Several of the tube workers we have recruited this year have actu-

ally signed up at SWP/Bookmarks or other events where non-tube workers have helped.

In the localities, where we have even two or three comrades in the same union or industry there should be regular caucuses to discuss our work. These should be supplemented by regional and national fraction meetings, including providing support and direction for our comrades in full time union posts or lay officials.

In Tower Hamlets, our teacher comrades caucused to deal with a serious attack on Respect by head teachers in the area and helped build a 60 strong NUT meeting, which was addressed by George Galloway.

In health, the drive for successful Keep Our NHS Public meetings followed a fraction meeting of key health worker comrades. In AMICUS, our NEC members meet with the Industrial Department and other AMICUS members before every NEC.

Alongside this, in each area our branches and districts need to identify key workplaces and re-establish sales of *Socialist Worker* from the outside. Bus depots, civil service workplaces and post offices remain obvious candidates.

In the private sector, we need to think beyond the traditional industries and establish links with militants in places such as the giant Asda distribution centres.

Sometimes we will need to have a district strategy for covering a workplace – Hounslow branch can hardly be expected to cover Heathrow's 40,000 employees alone. Comrades in Hackney, Newham and Waltham Forest will need to work together to cover the estimated 100,000 construction workers due to begin descending on East London shortly in the run up to the 2012 Olympics.

Recruiting new members and readers brings vitality to our fractions. There are many key activists in the movement who will join the SWP or take a subscription to *Socialist Worker* if asked. We want to see more union bulletins and newsheets using chunks of our publications – as happened widely with the 15,000 Pensions specials we sold.

Building opposition to neo-liberalism in the workplace, developing solidarity for workers in struggle and building a political alternative to New Labour are the tasks ahead.

FIGHTING RACISM TODAY

In the ninth year of New Labour government race and racism are very much at the heart of politics in Britain.

It would be extremely light-minded to ignore the potential for a serious growth in racism and the opening that can afford the British National Party. At the same time, the last 12 months have seen significant developments that point to the potential for a resurgence in anti-racist politics and organisation.

UNITE AGAINST FASCISM

Two years ago we put forward a strategy of building a wider united front with the trade union movement to block the electoral aspirations of the BNP.

The BNP had won 21 councillors, and were scoring significant votes in elections by attempting to emulate Le Pen's Front National. They had some success in presenting themselves as an alternative protest party and were attempting to drag politics to the right.

Defeats of the National Front and BNP on the streets in the 70s and also in the ballot box in the early 90s led them to shift to a Euro-fascist strategy, projecting a more respectable image, though in fact the BNP has a dual strategy of winning elections and provoking serious violence, as they did in Bradford and Burnley and Oldham in 2001.

Unite Against Fascism was set up in order to build a broad-based united front that could produce an effective opposition against the Nazis.

It brought together all the key anti-racist organisations, the TUC and major unions as well as faith groups, the SWP and Labour members. Since its formation, the BNP has failed to make the breakthrough it had hoped for.

Griffin invited Le Pen to launch his Euro-election campaign, but UAF broke up the press conference and Griffin's strategy back-fired and the Nazi label began to stick. Indications in the polls that the BNP would get three MEPs came to nothing.

On May Day 40,000 young people turned up in Trafalgar Square in the middle of the election campaign to a Love Music, Hate Racism gig that represented emergence into the anti-fascist movement of a new layer of young activists.

Frustrated in the subsequent elections,

the BNP set up its first ever national demonstration in Keighley in November 2005. Unite called a national demonstration and it was clear there would be a mass mobilisation, causing the police to ban the BNP march. In the same week 150 BNP members turned up to support Nick Griffin in court, but over 1000 anti-fascists turned up, leaving the Nazis isolated and demoralised.

In places where the united front strategy has been followed, only one further BNP councillor was elected (in Goresbrook), and he has since been defeated.

It is worth examining what happened in Bradford in 2003, where UAF was blocked by sectarians in the local TUC, and four councillors were elected. The argument to 'keep it local' in the Bradford wards masks a reluctance to form a real working class opposition which requires the active involvement of Muslims.

This stems from a failure to accept the changing face of racism (discussed elsewhere in the documents). Like some on the French left, the Bradford sectarians begin with problems inside the Muslim community ('Asian grooming', arranged marriages) therefore feeding into racist myths that strengthen the BNP and divide opposition to it.

A second sectarian position is that of Searchlight, who have some purchase in the movement and particularly amongst the trade union bureaucracy because of their previous work, which attempts to restrict the anti-fascist movement to working within the Labour Party.

This is the same mistake that SOS Racisme made in the 1980s in France. Searchlight puts out leaflets that argue for a vote for Labour as a principled method of fighting the BNP, writing off thousands who oppose the BNP but do not support New Labour.

STOPPING THE BNP AND FIGHTING RACISM

Despite our successes in holding back the Nazis, the conditions under New Labour of widespread despondency, racist policies and the hype around terrorism, have led to an increase in racist attacks and the danger that the BNP could still continue to consolidate unless they face effective opposition.

This willingness on the part of large numbers of people to come out to anti-fascist gigs and to mobilise is part of the left mood we are seeing elsewhere. The fact that the BNP has not yet been able to break through gives confidence to those involved in these activities. Moreover, it leaves us free to build Respect free from defensive anti-fascist work.

It is essential that we strengthen Unite's roots in the unions. In Beeston after the London bombs went off, it was possible to keep the BNP out of Leeds because a group of trade unionists, Muslims and socialists prevented them from meeting in a local park.

Make sure your union group is affiliated. This year it is essential that we carry on building Unite because the local elections present the Nazis with their best chance to win seats.

We need to deepen Unite's roots in the trade unions, every socialist should initiate to get their branch, shop, community group to join and back the conference on February 18th (postponed to see off the BNP demo in Keighley)

Over May Day weekend 2006 there will be another Love Music Hate Racism carnival in Trafalgar Square and in other cities. We need to build these to help weld together people against the Nazis and challenge racism or communal divisions.

ANTI-RACISM AND THE SWP

Our work over the issue of racism has always been wider than simply building a united front against the Nazis. There is now in Britain a growing frustration among black, Asian and other groups at racism in general.

This is most obviously the case within Muslim communities. The government has attempted both to co-opt a layer of conservative Muslim leaders and at the same time to ratchet up the pressure on the vast majority of Muslims to fall in line behind Bush's war on terror. The networks that have developed around the Stop the War Coalition and Respect among Muslims are part of building a confident, radical alternative leadership.

There are now signs of similar developments among other groups. The response to the launch of the new book on how schools fail black children, *Tell It Like It Is*, has revealed a deep anger at continuing levels of institutionalised racism 12 years after Stephen Lawrence was murdered. The launch meeting was not only 200-strong, but in tone was both angry and left wing.

It was a similar experience when a comrade organised a meeting around the book through his school in north London. About 100 people attended, most of them parents and most of them black. A series of other meetings are organised for January and February. Key to the success of the launch and the north London meeting were high profile speakers, a broad platform and building the event through networks. Out of these events can come rooted campaigns which can re-establish the tradition of

confronting institutionalised racism.

The response to the education book is part of a wider phenomenon. Many comrades have reported in the last six months how, as anti-war sentiment has spread more widely into working class communities, the number of black African-Caribbean people becoming involved in Stop the War has increased from what was a disproportionately low level.

Our own meetings on subjects such as John Coltrane, Rosa Parks and Multiculturalism over the last few months have attracted significant numbers of black people looking for radical politics. The importance of this development is that for some years ourselves and others have spoken of a "crisis of leadership" within the African-Caribbean communities.

One reason for that has been the continued loyalty of large numbers of black workers to Labour – a fact that was apparent at the general election where in Tottenham, for example, the Blairite David Lammy could count on that loyalty.

Another reason for an apparent depoliticisation among African-Caribbeans is precisely the fact that the official political leadership has been composed of the likes of Lammy, Oona King and Paul Boateng. That "leadership" has reinforced ideas around black underachievement, gun-crime, etc which blame the victims and hold up an individual, middle class solution.

The bankruptcy of an older generation of hard black separatist leaders was tragically apparent in Lozells, Birmingham. Incapable of leading a struggle against poverty and racism, some ended up fuelling communalist tensions with Asians in the area.

The fact that layers of African-Caribbean people are looking for a new leadership is very welcome. And the intervention of comrades in Birmingham around the Lozells events showed that it is possible for Respect, and the SWP, to win support among them.

That's true of other groups as well. The pattern of immigration into Britain has changed markedly over the last 15 years. There are new groups who are subject to new forms of racism. The largest single group in the Dalston area of Hackney, for example, is no longer Afro-Caribbean, but African.

It is now common to hear people speaking Russian, Polish or another east European language in areas that have traditionally been home to new migrants, such as east London. Some 290,000 workers from the new east European members of the European Union have paid for permits to work in Britain, though not all of them have made the journey. In addition, New Labour has

dispersed asylum seekers to parts of Britain that have not previously had a significant immigrant population.

That calls for both thinking through the new patterns of racism that we face and broadening our work in these communities.

Comrades in the Socialist Worker platform in the Scottish Socialist Party have provided a clear model of how to take up the issue of asylum. Early on, they rejected the approach of trying to substitute for welfare provision denied to asylum seekers by New Labour.

Instead, they focused explicitly on making New Labour's attacks on asylum seekers a political issue. That meant winning forces such as the trade unions, sections of the Scottish Nationalist and Labour parties, and other organisations to a serious campaign. That gave the impetus to take the issue into working class communities.

The result has been that the Scottish Executive is under visible anti-racist pressure over asylum from the left rather than simply from the right. A similar approach over the deportation of Zimbabwean asylum seekers has helped draw significant NGOs, such as the Refugee Council, towards campaigning against the government, and has meant taking the issue into networks of trade unionists, rather than having it off to a handful of "asylum specialists".

We need to be part of winning the trade unions to a similar approach over organising migrant workers. Socialist Worker has reported in recent weeks on a bus strike by T&G members in Shropshire which included Polish drivers and on moves by the RMT union to organise cleaners on the tube, who are overwhelmingly African and east European migrants.

That such examples are relatively rare is a sign of the weakness of the trade unions in organising a changing working class. But they are also an indication that migrant workers can be organised. It is true that employers and the government will try to pit migrant workers against those who have been here longer. But it is not inevitable that the working class will be so fractured.

Both *Socialist Worker* and *Socialist Review* have carried analyses that, while certainly not downplaying the level of racism, show how there has been increasing integration over the last decade. This refutes the claim by Trevor Phillips and others that Britain is "sleepwalking" into US levels of segregation. While the communal violence witnessed in Lozells could take place elsewhere, there is no evidence that such extreme tensions dominate inner-city areas.

Playing up the degree of separation is part of a wider ideological attack on mul-

ticulturalism. What the right, and sections of the left, are attacking is not tokenistic policies, but the very idea that different groups can integrate without being forced to accept some officially-sanctioned "Britishness".

The debates around anti-racism and multiculturalism will continue. And we are going to face important tactical questions around our anti-racist work. This puts a premium upon discussion in party branch meetings, among caucuses of comrades and in our publications.

These discussions must not be hived off to black or Asian comrades or "race experts". However, part of the party's response needs to be developing a cadre which can be part of creating a new leadership among black and immigrant communities. As a contribution to that the party will be holding a day school for black members in February.

The extension and deepening of Respect beyond the areas where it is already strong will be crucial to challenging both the BNP and racism. The fact that the areas of east London where Respect is has grown most spectacularly are ones where the BNP had influence only a decade ago is a sign of what is possible elsewhere.

Without establishing a mass, multiracial radical left alternative to New Labour we are going to be faced again and again with the threat of breakthroughs by the far right. As a party, we are very well placed to build on the last 12 months and connect with the wider layers of black, Asian and migrant work.

WE NEED TO GAMBLE ON STUDENT WORK

On Monday 7 November, George Galloway spoke to 602 students at a Student Respect meeting in Leeds University, from which comrades came back literally speechless. This is the biggest student meeting of its kind for a very, very long time. And it is not an isolated success.

It is demonstrative of a potential both for the movement and the party that our work in the universities this year has opened up, unlike any which has existed for many years.

Two things have characterised the start to the new academic year. The first is a

dramatically new strategy centered on the building of Student Respect. The second is the success that this has brought about so far. We have been able to change tack, more comprehensively than has perhaps been done in the party outside the universities, as a new academic year, and a new layer of students coming through freshers' fairs provide the conditions for a definite shift in our work.

As with the situation outside the universities, Respect provides the possibility to regroup and reform the student left in a broad, diverse and radical coalition which harnesses much larger forces than the revolutionary left.

Just one of many experiences which highlight the importance of this is the election of a Respect NUS delegate from SOAS – a previously unwinnable election where we used to only stand for propaganda purposes. In the first round of these elections, the vast majority of which take place in the New Year, we have also had delegates elected from Swansea, Kent and Goldsmiths.

The freshers' fairs this year were notable, not just quantitatively with the large numbers of students who signed up for SWSS and Student Respect (Liverpool, in one day: 146 joined Respect, 75 to SWSS, with 2 joining the SWP and 61 papers sold; QMW: 270 Respect, 102 SWSS; Manchester: 350 Respect, 140 SWSS), but also qualitatively—many people who joined were key figures in Afro-Caribbean, Islamic, Palestinian, etc. societies, and many were already talking like political leaders, (understandable, given that the new generation of students are the ones who led the school student strikes, etc. around the war).

This was apparent right from the beginning with the Student Respect activists, meetings held immediately after freshers' fairs at each university (with 35 attending at Manchester, 17 after the first day at Leeds—where 79 joined Respect—and 14 at Kent).

The freshers' fairs were followed up by a wide variety of extremely successful meetings and events. Galloway repeatedly spoke to audiences of several hundred (550 at Exeter, 360 at Swansea, 350 at LSE, 260 at De Montford, 400 at Sheffield), but Respect's climate change meetings, Black History Month events and film showings have all been much more successful than similar meetings were before Student Respect.

Over 100 attended Black History Month events in SOAS and Manchester, and over 50 in UCL and Leeds. Plymouth's climate meeting had 40 people at it, the biggest political meeting there for some time. The task now that we are over the first hurdle of proving that

Student Respect can work, is going to be to ensure these groups continue to grow well beyond the layer of SWSS activists, who kick-started them in many places (turning consumers of politics into producers), and develop longer term strategies through regular organising meetings.

Respect has also been able to put itself at the heart of activity inside the colleges. Following two very successful Unite events initiated by Respect at Leeds and Sheffield University we were able to play a major role in bringing hundreds of students onto the anti fascist protest at Leeds Crown Court against Nick Griffin. Respect needs a combination of the "big politics" of the regular events in the colleges plus activity. Every group needs to look for the national and local issues that they can initiate activity around—it's the combination of ideas and activity that will establish the groups.

But as well as the Student Respect success, SWSS meetings, which have placed an emphasis on theory, have also been larger than before too, with many audiences in the twenties and thirties. 32 went to Marxism and Religion, at UEL, 25 at Latin America: resistance and revolution, at Manchester, 23 on Marx at Kent where 3 joined the SWP (2 on direct debit), 26 on Marx at Imperial with 1 joining on direct debit, and so on.

These meetings have been most successful where effort has been put into the building of big, diverse Student Respect groups which have drawn in forces from beyond the ranks of SWSS, and from which the best activists, have been invited to party events.

Just as SWSS fits better in the context of Student Respect, similarly both have to fit within the framework of wider Stop the War activity. If anywhere has been a weak point of our work it has been Stop the War.

The emphasis on Respect meant that in many universities we have been slow on moving on Stop the War but we have begun to retake lost ground. Over the next few weeks a series of big name Stop the War speakers will be addressing meetings across the country (the first such meeting drew 60 students at Middlesex uni).

Where Stop the War groups already exist Student Respect groups have to be a key part of them, meeting to discuss intervention in StW, and where the groups don't exist, Student Respect is now kick-starting them—the peace conference on December the 10th is the focus for the rest of the term with groups fighting to build big delegations, get motions through UGMs etc.

The work of building Stop the War in the colleges won't end with the peace conference. The ongoing crisis in Iraq, next years national demo in Iraq will etc will make the building of Stop the War

groups a vital component of our work in the colleges.

This whole strategy is a concerted effort to look outwards to, and to build, the movement, and is our logical strategy as revolutionaries (contrast this to the sectarian groups who stand on the sidelines).

However, throwing ourselves into the movement throws up an important challenge. The organisation and the political confidence of the SWP activists becomes a vital question. The SWP caucus, the SWSS meetings, Socialist Worker and our other publications are key in arming our comrades with the arguments they need to go out and build inside the movement.

Many of the people we meet are extremely open to our ideas and politics, and we can recruit on a big scale.

For example, the chair of the Afro-Caribbean society at De Montford, who we met through Respect stuff, joined the party. In a week 5 others from the Leicester Unis were recruited. A student at Plymouth joined after a forum on Marx, 2 joined on direct-debit at the University of the West of England (and are now throwing themselves into building Respect and the party), 2 have joined at UCL since freshers, fair, 2 first-years at York (who used to travel to Manchester from Boston to get Socialist Worker, and went to York because they thought Alex Callinicos was still there!) joined on subs, as did a post-grad at Oxford who was very close to the SWSS group as an undergrad at LSE.

There are many more examples. 4 students joined the SWP following the anti fascist demo in Leeds. Recruitment means we have to be visible within the movement through the strategies we are arguing, the papers we are selling, and the SWSS meetings we are putting on—weekly SWSS caucuses are the only way that all of this can be maintained.

The fact that we face these challenges (notably continuing to broaden Student Respect, and at the same time hardening a SWP student cadre) arises because of our success in pushing outwards into the movement, and of the strategy employed so far.

The potential to build the movement and at the same time for wide scale recruitment of a serious cadre to the SWP exists in a way that it hasn't for a long time. This potential has to be realised. This means everyone taking the work in the universities extremely seriously. Not only can we re-shape the student left around our work with Student Respect, we can also build a strong layer of revolutionaries inside the colleges who are literally the future of the SWP.

SWSS office

NATIONAL COMMITTEE — A PROPOSAL

Five years ago, delegates at the SWP annual conference voted to create a National Committee. The NC was an elected annually at conference and was made up of 100 members.

It was agreed that the body had to meet at least four times a year. It is a serious body that debated and discussed key issues raised by the movement and the party. Broadly speaking the NC is comprised of three groups of comrades. Firstly experienced and long-standing members of the party, secondly key trade union members and activists in the movement and finally a layer of new members.

Over the years the NC has played a valuable role in directing the CC and the party over a number of important questions. However a number of problems have arisen.

Despite the fact that the body has debated some very important issues, it has failed to bring those debates back into the SWP branches and districts. The reason for this is very simple, many of those on the NC were not elected for the role they play in their districts or branches, and the result is that the debates do not get conveyed into the local areas. This means that the CC has had to organise a series of district wide NC report back meetings.

There is a problem of attendance. The highest attendance at the NC last year was 71, and at the last three NCs have only had 50-55 delegates present.

This problem is related to the first problem. Precisely because a layer of the NC is not active in their districts/branches, they feel disconnected from the debates that take place at the NC and see no purpose in attending the meetings.

Likewise some new and inexperienced members of the NC find the debates hard to follow and are often not fully integrated into the party's work and therefore gradually stop attending NC meetings.

Whilst believing that there are real problems concerning the NC, the CC believe that it is important both for Party democracy and to strengthen the SWP's work, it is vital that we have regular national meetings that can debate the perspectives and problems that arise during the year.

The following CC proposal was passed:

That the CC organises at least four SWP Party Councils a year to which each branch is entitled to send two delegates elected at branch meetings.

Secondly that we elect annually at conference an NC of 50 comrades, who attend by right the Party Council. The idea behind this is to make sure that the Party Council has a body of experienced comrades who will raise debates and challenge the CC where necessary – whilst also ensuring that new members have every opportunity to raise their concerns and criticisms.

Central Committee

MONEY MONEY MONEY – THIS YEAR'S SUBS DRIVE

Having a professional organisation has been one significant element contributing to the effectiveness and growth of the SWP over the years and the impact and respect we have in the movement.

High quality publications and propaganda, a central office, local organisers, well run meetings and events are all important – and all cost money.

The SWP does not just expect political education and commitment from its members, but also a generous level of financial support to allow the organisation to function effectively.

Part of the challenge of building the SWP today includes how to develop and adapt that tradition. The number of comrades who pay subs of between £50 and £150 a month is a fantastic reflection of their commitment. New members more usually start by paying £10 or £20 a month. The number now doing this shows how successful our recruitment has been and this is obviously crucial for the future of the party in every way.

We value whatever money members donate to the party and recognise the other financial demands on our members both personal and political. But we do want to develop a climate where both members and money are taken seriously.

We do not want to put off new members by just asking them for money, but nor do we want to write them off by not taking them seriously enough to put an argument about why raising the money

to fund our organisation is important. There are also a number of comrades in work who have either never been asked or not been convinced to consider increasing their subs to somewhere on the £50–150 scale.

OUR FINANCES

Our income increased last year, reflecting both attention to our finances and the positive atmosphere in the party. The subs drive at the beginning of 2005 was extremely successful and raised the SWP's income by an extra £12,500 a month.

The appeal for Socialist Worker also managed to near the target by the beginning of this year. More comrades gave than in the previous year and 20% of the money raised came from non-members.

We have also been able to reduce our expenditure by the move to our new offices and the change to our printing arrangements.

We estimate that we need to increase our subscription income by a further £15,000 this year. We believe that this is possible, and if achieved should put the party's future finances on a firm financial footing.

WHAT WAS AGREED

The following was voted on at conference. This was not just because there are some changes in the method of the subs drive, but also to debate and agree suggested subs levels and increases makes this a democratic decision and helps develop the collective responsibility for the process.

It was agreed that the subs drive this year should aim to increase our income by £15000 a month. This should come from:

- Recruiting new members on subs
- Encouraging comrades who have not increased their subs for a number of years to consider increasing them
- Encouraging comrades in work to pay subs of at least £30 a month and to consider moving onto the £50-150 a month scale where appropriate
- Encouraging students and unemployed to pay £5 a month where possible
- Asking for an increase of between £5 and £10 a month from those already paying appropriate subs

Obviously comrade's circumstances all differ and we need to make sure that this is understood and dealt with sensitively.

DIRECT DEBIT INCREASES BY POST

We agreed that we ask by post for the suggested increases from those paying by Direct Debit. Comrades will receive two special letters from us giving them the option of a larger or smaller increase than suggested, or of not making any increase.

If we do not hear from them we will apply the proposed increases in March. We will take as much care as possible to ensure that comrades are aware of this process.

Monthly subs	Proposed increase
Over £100	£10
£50-99	£7
£20-49	£5
Under £20 –	

We would speak to comrades individually

Of course individual comrades will still chose whether they are able to increase their subs by this amount if at all.

This means that the effort put into the subs drive both at the national office and in the districts will not have to be spent on the large amount of work individually contacting loyal members who pay a significant amount to the party and who will largely be happy if they possible can to agree the proposed increase.

This allows the subs drive this year to be targeted in the areas that need most work. Our time should be spent on speaking to comrades who have not recently increased their subs, or those who need a longer conversation to explain how the party's finances work.

If we significantly expand the overall number of members paying subs and raise the lower levels of subs upwards that will also be of real benefit to the party's finances in the future.

PROPOSAL FOR THE SOCIALIST WORKER MONTHLY MAGAZINE

WHY A NEW MAGAZINE?

At present we produce *Socialist Worker* that struggles to squeeze as much news, comment and debate into its 16 pages

every week as possible.

We are forced to make tough decisions about what we can include—there is a real premium on space, which leads us to be cautious about commissioning longer articles that might be significantly cut later, or not run at all.

Because of this we have some difficulty addressing issues which are either tangential to week to week politics, or that require an article of significant length in order to be useful. *Socialist Review* has very good articles of this nature but is often only seen by only a fraction of the people who would be interested because the *Review* is not distributed widely enough.

This proposal attempts to address these problems by suggesting that we produce a new magazine that will be an integral part of *Socialist Worker*—a supplement of sorts that will replace the existing *Socialist Review*. The new magazine would draw upon the strengths of both *Socialist Worker* and *Socialist Review* and will use the better sale and distribution of the paper to reach a wider audience. It will also mean that *Socialist Worker* will be an even more attractive publication to subscribe to and should therefore help us to boost the regular sale of the paper.

THE DETAIL

The magazine would be 32 pages, full colour throughout and printed on high quality newsprint. It would be distributed by being inserted into *Socialist Worker* at the printers and would be produced with a much greater degree of co-ordination with the paper, sharing a number of key resources, including some staff and equipment, thereby reducing duplication and waste. More importantly, it allows us to politically integrate the two publications in a way that has not previously been possible.

The magazine would be built around a core of a single lead article of about 3,000 words and a single interview, or second article, of about 2,000 words.

The lead article's subject matter would be political but generally more tangential to the type generally carried by *SW*, allowing us to deal with subjects that we rarely have the opportunity to discuss at length in the paper.

One emphasis of the magazine will be political culture with major reviews of the arts, books, film, music and theatre. We would occasionally want to use the interview space to talk to artists and writers.

We would also like to expand upon the international coverage that we currently run in *SW* by devoting a page to each of the following areas: Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

Here we would allow our correspondents to round up events in each continent and develop themes over several issues. These pages would not necessarily limit themselves to the day to day politics of the continent but could help illuminate aspects of culture as well.

There should also be a number of regular columnists. And there would be some single-page articles that take up subjects that we often struggle to include in *SW*. These could include science, technology, law, food and health, among others.

The immediate week to week editorial direction will be conducted by the magazine's editor, a member of staff who works on the magazine exclusively, and the *SW* editorial board. The magazine will be guided by an extended *Socialist Worker* editorial board that will be convened every two months. This board would have the opportunity to reflect upon the work of both the paper and its magazine and offer critique, ideas and suggestions as to future content for both.

WHAT SHOULD THE MAGAZINE BE CALLED?

Launching a new magazine as a section for the paper should make us think about what the magazine is called.

There are two options: A new name will tell people this is a new venture with a different style and content. The possibility of keeping the name *Socialist Review* as a subtitle in the masthead remains. However, keeping the magazine's name as *Socialist Review* has some advantages. We have a magazine that people have familiarity with that has been produced by the party for several decades. Maintaining the name maintains a certain stability. We welcome suggestions on this question.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE SOCIALIST REVIEW SUBSCRIBERS?

The magazine will still have a cover price for the situations where it is sold separately from *SW*, eg shops etc. This will mean that we can continue all *SR* subscriptions, thus avoiding a large fall in the party's publication revenue.

Full Spectrum Resistance: There are approximately 1,500 subscribers to FSR, most of them members of the Socialist Workers Party. We will continue to service them by sending the new magazine with *Socialist Worker*. Of course, some will notice that the magazine now comes free with *Socialist Worker* but overall there is no substantial change to their arrangement as subscribers will be receiving three publications just as they did previously.

Direct subscribers: There are about 500 direct subscribers to *SR* (318 UK/190 Overseas) who renew by cash/cheque/credit card. As their subscriptions become due, we will offer to transfer them to *SW* direct debit, Full Spectrum Resistance or to renew just the magazine. Therefore, we do not anticipate a huge fall off of subscriptions.

International bulks: Continue as normal. Shop sales: Continue as normal.

Options for extra copies: There will, of course, be a need for extra copies of the new magazine to have on stalls etc to give to regular buyers who missed the issue and to have in the Circulation Department. The detail of who should get stocks of these extras will have to be negotiated but the principle is not difficult or expensive to arrange.

WHEN WILL THE MAGAZINE BE READY?

We can expect to have a launch edition ready for the end of January.

SWP CENTRAL COMMITTEE 2006

The slate nominated by the outgoing CC was elected at conference. They are:

1. Chris Bambery
2. Weyman Bennett
3. Michael Bradley
4. Alex Callinicos
5. Lindsey German
6. Chris Harman
7. Chris Nineham
8. Moira Nolan
9. John Rees
10. Martin Smith
11. Candy Udwin

SECURITY

Conference was marred by one very serious breach of security. One delegate, Matt Kidd, (who had previously spoken in the debate around the CC elections) posted details of the debate, including the names of comrades who had spoken, on an anarchist web-site.

His web posting encouraged people to read further details of the SWP conference in the *Weekly Worker*.

It must be clear to every delegate who attends SWP conference that they have been elected to conference by their branch and that it's their responsibility to report the debates at conference back to that branch before anyone else...let alone report those debates on the internet.

It goes against the democratic traditions of any working class organisation for the events of a conference to be banded around by delegates, especially when it's passed on to hostile organisations or publications.

It's also incredibly irresponsible for anyone to spread around the names of conference delegates. Only recently an SWP member lost his contract at work following the publication of an article he had written for our pre conference bulletin being printed in the *Weekly Worker* and read by his manager.

We are not involved in a game where the democratic decisions made by the SWP can be treated as gossip and passed on to any old scandal sheet.

Delegates at the conference were very angry about Matt Kidd's behaviour and voted unanimously to refer the issue to the Disputes Committee. However, despite Matt's contribution on party democracy at conference he decided to ignore the unanimous decision of conference and resigned from the SWP rather than discuss his behaviour with the Disputes Committee.

The issue of security is important. Matt Kidd's behaviour should act as a reminder that we all have to act responsibly when on the internet.

Comrades will be aware that there are loads of internet discussion lists and news groups that exist to allow activists to discuss, debate and organise. Some of these, like the anarchist site mentioned earlier are hostile to our tradition and some of them are frequented by people who would like to "destroy the SWP" (a recent fraternal comment from the *Weekly Worker*).

Of course comrades are free to use the internet and email to take part in political discussions, but for obvious reasons comrades should take care about what they post on these lists. It should be a basic tenet of security that nobody posts the names or contact details of any member of the SWP on these groups. It should also be very clear to every SWP member that we do not post internal documents, party notes or forward emails on.

It is very important that comrades feel free to write for pre conference bulletins etc without fear of them being used by organisations hostile to us or by the bosses or the establishment.