

Alliance for Workers' Liberty conference 2003

Session 1 on sat

Taken by Janine Booth

Chair: Liam Conway

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE REPORT

Nik Barstow introduced

PROPOSAL FOR NOMINATING COMMISSION

Proposed by Martin Thomas.

No speech against.

Passed with two votes against.

Nominations opened for three members of Nominating Commission.

Martin Thomas nominated: Vicki Morris, Caroline Henry, Patrick Murphy

Nick Holden proposed Dave Ball instead of Patrick Murphy. Dave Ball declined the nomination.

Vicki, Caroline and Patrick were elected without opposition.

NO TO WAR! NO TO SADDAM!

Clive Bradley introduced, noting:

- the size of recent demonstrations
- the involvement of young people
- the different nature of this war to other recent wars; in particular, there are more straightforwardly economic-imperialist motivations
- that the US/British war can not bring peace and democracy to Iraq
- the brutality of Saddam and the Ba'ath regime
- comparisons to the Vietnam war: socialists could support victory of Vietnamese **people** against US war, but can not support victory of Saddam – instead, have to be against both sides
- the Cairo Declaration, originating from a conference financed by Egyptian and Iraqi business, addressed by Saddam's adviser – socialists should not support it, yet much of the British left does
- that the AWL has a responsibility to tackle this political failing
- that the AWL is promoting the alternative international declaration 'No to War! No to Saddam!'

Dan Nichol proposed his amendment, arguing:

- the importance of the 'No to War! No to Saddam!' declaration
- that the call for a referendum on the war is a useful tool, but labour movement action is more important
- that we should be upfront and ready to provide leadership

Gerry Byrne spoke, arguing that:

- the Stop the War Coalition is not the entirety of the anti-war movement
- socialists who back alliances with MAB in the name of 'attracting young Muslims' are actually talking only about young Muslim **men**
- the 'People's Assembly' currently being organised is a repeat of 'popular frontist' tactics of the 1930s

John Buckell spoke, arguing:

- against the call for a referendum, giving examples of other issues where we would oppose a referendum eg. asylum seekers, and pointing out that a socialist government would not make decisions by referendum
- that the AWL needs to be 'the conscience of the left' against the opportunism of some of the anti-war movement, notably hysterical 'anti-Zionism' and alliance with the MAB

- that pro-war arguments on the left are quite persuasive, so we have to clearly address the question of what to do about Saddam

Steve Freeman (observer, RDG) offered critical comments:

- that the AWL's slogans are inadequate, as they give insufficient attention to Blair and to the idea that 'the main enemy is at home'
- we need practical proposals for how people outside Iraq can help the people of Iraq to organise a people's democratic revolution
- however, there is not a great difference between the **content** of what the RDG and the AWL say, only the specific slogans

Charlie McDonald described his experiences of talking to people at work and in the union about the war, discussing the possibilities of workplace action, including both walkouts and 'lower-level' action such as wearing anti-war stickers etc.

Faz Velmi spoke, arguing that:

- the war has radicalised lots of youth and students
- February 15 mobilisation may well split once second UN resolution is passed, with eg. LibDems splitting off
- the SWP's alliance with the MAB is entrenching the fundamentalists within the Muslim community
- the AWL needs to find people within the Muslim community to work with on this issue, and must be careful in our approach in order to achieve this

Sacha Ismail spoke:

- arguing that we need to expose the MAB, as lots of people do not know what they really are, and because we do not want to come across as being against all Muslims
- opposing Steve F's argument as being pre-occupied with precise slogans
- concerned about the call for a referendum, as it would demobilise if it were defeated
- cautioning that some people are signing **all** declarations against the war, so we need to explain that the 'No to War! No to Saddam!' declaration is an **alternative** to the Cairo declaration

Martin Thomas spoke:

- opposing John B's point about a referendum, as a socialist government would have higher forms of democracy, but as we do not have a socialist government, we should seize on any democratic checks available
- explaining the contents of the current issue of 'Workers' Liberty' and its relevance to the issue of the war and imperialism
- arguing that we need a politics for the 21st century based on the new structure of capitalism and world workers' unity

Alan Brookmyre argued that this war is **not** a war for oil, but for US domination of the new world order

Pete Radcliff spoke, arguing that:

- for all its faults, the Stop the War Coalition is the organisation that many anti-war campaigners will turn towards, so our intervention in it is important
- the SWP is vulnerable, as it can not necessarily numerically dominate all meetings, and can not prevent all discussion
- we need to organise meetings with eg Kurdish and Iraqi people, including those who support the war

Session two after lunch

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Patrick Murphy can not sit on the Nominating Commission for practical reasons. Tom Cashman proposed Nik Barstow. Jill Mountford proposed Liam Conway. Tom withdrew the nomination for Nik. Liam was elected without opposition.

The Nominating Commission will be available from 7pm in the Jeremy Bentham for comrades to make presentations.

Nominations for the Standing Orders Committee and the Disputes Committee should also be made to the Nominating Commission.

NO TO WAR! NO TO SADDAM! (continued)

Pat Yarker reported on anti-war activities in Norwich, including:

- a large local demonstration and 19 coaches to the national march
- a lively local group
- problem with lack of labour movement orientation
- activity at Pat's school, involving both teachers and sixth form/year 11 students: teach-in, delegation on the march, plans for symbolic action at school eg black armbands

Sean Matgamna made several points:

- in reply to Steve F, 'No to war' is the best way of saying 'No to Blair'; but precise slogans are a technical, not political, matter
- in reply to John B, a workers' government would not be able to pursue a policy counterposed to popular opinion
- the CP's 'People's Assembly' was a defeatist project
- most of the left is acting as though it has no positive programme, only a negative imprint of the ruling class

Mark Sandell spoke, making the following points:

- 'No to War! No to Saddam!' is a slogan that gets a positive response
- 'Troops Out': the position in the document is right – we would support resistance from Iraqi peoples against US troops propping up new regime; but oppose unthinking call for 'Troops Out' in situations like Kurdish 'safe havens' in aftermath of last war
- what do we do about Saddam? we support revolutionaries and democrats in Iraq – not an easy answer, but the only one
- loose nature of anti-war movement gives us the space to organise anti-war activity around our politics

Kate Ahrens highlighted the following problems with the demand for a referendum:

- it is not counterposed to the popular-frontism of the mainstream anti-war movement
- Trotsky's point over Ludlow was that a referendum is illusory and does not put a brake on the war drive
- we would not set the question for the referendum, and could end up calling for an abstention in a referendum that we had called for

Patrick Murphy:

- replied to Steve F, arguing that there is not an equivalence between 'No to Saddam' and 'No to Blair'
- replied to John B, that we should be aggressive and sharp against 'left' pro-war arguments from eg Nick Cohen, who have a naïve confidence in Bush's and Blair's war aims, and whose support for war is a reaction to the weakness of the labour movement

Mike Rowley argued that:

- the left is in both moral chaos and organisational decay
- the SWP argues that socialists should intervene in the anti-war movement without politics
- calling for a referendum should not be a priority for us, as we have many more important points to make

Bruce Robinson:

- replied to John B about how detailed we need to be about how to overthrow Saddam, arguing that it is unclear how much, if any, democratic legitimacy the Iraqi opposition has, it is unclear what the US will do after deposing Saddam and what regime it will impose, and that therefore, we can not be too detailed at this point, but should consider the various possible outcomes, and emphasise the basic principles of solidarity with Iraqi peoples for self-determination, against both Saddam and Bush
- disagreed with Alan B, and argued that oil is a significant factor in the war drive
- argued for the call for a referendum, saying that it cut against the popular-frontism of the 'People's Assembly'

Mick Duncan spoke:

- sharing some of the concerns expressed about a referendum, but felt that we could avoid these pitfalls
- proposing the idea of a 'Grand Petition', as the Chartists did
- arguing that we should give greater prominence to the rights of national minorities in the region, eg the Kurds

John Bloxam spoke for the call for a referendum, arguing:

- that it is a very powerful weapon against the ruling class
- that we should not under-estimate the potential for very wide support for it
- that our starting point in deciding slogans is 'what campaigning do we want?', rather than 'what cuts against popular-frontism?'
- that we should not have passive concerns about who controls the question, but should campaign for a referendum as a positive part of our own programme

Dan Nichols summed up his amendment

- it represents the concerns expressed by comrades about prioritising the call for a referendum

Clive Bradley summed up the main proposal, highlighting:

- his view that there is no reason to oppose the call for a referendum
- the bad consequences for eg secularists, democrats, lesbian/gay/bisexual people within the Muslim community of the left giving a 'leg-up' to the MAB
- that this is a threat to and a betrayal of socialists in Muslim countries

VOTING

Vote on proposal to delete all reference to referendum: overwhelmingly defeated (about 10 votes for; about 6 abstentions)

Vote on Dan's amendment: overwhelmingly carried (one abstention)

Vote on all other proposals taken together: carried unanimously

Session three after break

NO SWEAT

Mick D introduced, covering:

- the revival in trade unionism
- the influx of new people into politics, many of whom are being attracted into campaigning against sweatshops
- the involvement of both anti-capitalist campaigners and trade unionists
- the centrality of the working class; the difference between NS and other anti-sweatshop campaigns is its emphasis on unionising sweatshop workers
- the inspiring example of United Students Against Sweatshops (USA)
- how well NS is doing, how positive we should be about it
- the interaction between protest movements and trade unions, which has helped to improve the political stances of both

- positive steps in the development of NS eg. the very large e-mail list and database; success in the Puma campaign; press coverage on East London sweatshop; £5,000 raised for Dita Sari and the Indonesian trade unions

Gerry Byrne proposed her amendment for a new publication, arguing that:

- we should have a publication that relates to the young people (and others) who are getting involved in anti-capitalist protests
- Bolshy is not performing this role, partly because last year's resolution was not carried out
- some of the new activists are not young, but are older activists who have been awoken from hibernation

Cathy Nugent proposed that Gerry's amendment be referred to the National Committee, due to the impacts of the proposal on the AWL's other proposals, and the need for further discussion

Sacha Ismail drew attention to the new issue of Bolshy, and urged comrades to get involved in distributing it

Nick Holden:

- asked both Gerry and Mick how they viewed the idea of No Sweat having a regular publication
- outlined planned activity around the country around International Women's Day next weekend
- argued that many people are getting involved in NS directly, not through the AWL, and are bringing ideas and energy
- argued that AWL trade union fractions should campaign about sweatshop labour, not simply by getting the union affiliated to NS, but by initiating campaigns on eg uniforms

Caroline Henry spoke:

- about the big potential of NS, particularly within the unions
- explaining how the issue of solidarity against sweatshop labour makes our general political approach seem more concrete
- about the importance of NS having a profile in the anti-war movement
- giving examples from work in Sheffield, including: a lecturer using NS materials on a TU course; an active NS group in Sheffield and at the university; NS activists showing an interest in AWL politics

Mark Sandell:

- compared the strengths of No Sweat with the weaknesses of the anti-war movement
- argued that the AWL's involvement in NS is important for providing Marxist answers to political questions

Clive Bradley

- the inadequacy of the mainstream left's view of the world as divided by imperialism/anti-imperialism is exposed by this issue – independent trade union movements do not develop in this way
- globally, 'third camp' politics is made quite practical by NS campaigning

Jean Lane:

- spoke in support of Gerry's amendment, explaining the need for a forum to discuss more in-depth ideas
- gave examples from East London of class divisions within the Muslim communities

Paul Hampton introduced his document surveying the newly-industrialised states, and making the following points:

- the development of capitalism in these states
- the rapid growth of the industrial working class in these countries
- the need to develop our own coverage of and contacts with socialists in these countries

Gerry summed up her amendment, but accepted that it be remitted to the National Committee

Mick summed up on the No Sweat report, stressing that socialists should not patronise workers in countries such as Indonesia, but should solidarise with them and learn from them

VOTING

Proposal to remit Gerry's amendment: carried unanimously

No Sweat report: carried unanimously

FUNDRAISING APPEAL

Duncan Morrison appealed for donations to the AWL fundraising appeal.

Final session on Saturday

Minutes by Daniella

AWL AND THE LEFT:SECTION ON THE RDG

Martin: That AWL have been on friendly terms with RDG for 20 years but recently has been a change and have been able to work more closely with them; activity and debate- Iraq, Euro, FBU, Socialist Alliance.

Have had political differences with them which remain – demand for democratic republic. In favour of this but disagree that monarchy has same weight that they give it. Don't agree that appropriate and relevant movement exists for this need to respond to logic of movement as it actually exists. AWL willing to have comrades as members who disagree on particular issues, existence of minority rights. MT clarifying that these rights would apply to RDG should they wish to join AWL. That we wish to pursue dialogue with RDG with a view to them joining AWL.

MT Comment on amendment: Put in as a result of our experiences with Thornett group, CPGB. That we continue to discuss with CPGB even though skewed perspective.

Steve from RDG: That they split from SWP on national question – Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland. Argued case for federal republic. That AWL in favour of this and therefore long standing disagreement now gone. RDG interested in fusion with AWL but not majority in group supporting this position. That decided not to go ahead with fusion with CPGB. That dialogue and relationship that ensued from this was healthy for RDG and CPGB respectively. That they could not form a joint platform with CPGB in Socialist Alliance as they have been able to do with AWL. That war will tell if there is a realistic chance of us working closer together leading to the position of fusion. Not ready to join until we are absolutely convinced it is right. Cant say exactly when that will be.

Vicki: Asks if Steve Freeman still against working in Labour Party.

Sasha: That RDG seem to agree with AWL on many large international issues. What were the main influences upon them causing them to split from SWP?

Helen: Important as socialists to learn lessons of the past and responsibility of older comrades to educate younger comrades on past fusions. That should be a dayschool to educate younger comrades upon history of group, past fusions to enable them to be able to properly evaluate if fusion with RDG is advantageous.

Chris from RDG: That if you can exist as an organisation with minimum resources, no publications is demonstration of coherence and strength of politics. That if we recomposed the left, need to get through all the old shit. Issue of monarchy just tip of iceberg need for further exploration of politics.

Clive: Difference in question of democracy relating to workers in SA and question of monarchy and anti monarchy movement. Disagreement with governmental slogan. That question of Labour Party not irrelevant to transformation of labour movement.

Nick: Given that clause in document about working with RDG in trade union fractions, need to clarify exactly how RDG relate and work within labour movement and their attitude to trade unions.

Martin: On unions – main experience of RDG from Tube where a comrade of RDG has attended AWL fraction. Agree on issues relating to Tube and able to work together well. Practical experience of working together good. Should proceed with collaboration. That NC will take up Helen's suggestion.

Motion carried: 1 against.

SUNDAY

Session 1

Taken by Liam Conway

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY, PAEDOPHILIA ETC

Procedural motion

Bruce Robinson: Proposal we should vote on Gerry's initial clauses only. Don't take a vote on the Gerry, Janine and Kate's full motions but start a discussion in the paper to clarify our position further. We should vote on the points around the age of consent rather than the general line of Gerry's articles in the paper.

Martin Thomas: We should adopt the agreed NC procedure. We discuss the motions as on the agenda but we do not take a vote on any of them. Taking small sections of the three motions doesn't add much to our existing position.

Vote on procedural motions to be taken at the conclusion of the debate.

Gerry B: Debate started when Weekly Worker printed a letter from a Paedophile justifying sex with an 11 year old. We also haven't really discussed this issue for many years. On the procedural motion I would prefer Bruce's position because it gives us a holding position.

On the resolution – part of the idea of solidarity is to stand up for people who can't stand up for themselves – this applies to children and young people. An age of consent is a bit arbitrary but it is the only clear way of laying down a guide that can protect children from adults. Lowering the age of consent would risk endangering children from adults. However, we should also allow for situations in which young people of a similar age have consenting sex.

On child pornography, producers and consumers should be prosecuted. They are encouraging the abuse of children by buying into this market. What about virtual reality child porn – simulated etc? Argument is that this feeds the appetite of child pornography, but in this case it is not produced in a way that is physically abusive or harmful. We need further debate on this – for example can paedophilia be increased or decreased by the distribution of such imagery? I support Janine and Kate's additions on rights of young people to sexual development

Janine: I support laws on age of consent, but the current law is not straightforward. It should not be illegal for two 15 year olds to have consensual sex. The law as it stands makes it harder for young people to make considered judgements about whether or not to have sex etc. we need to balance the right of children to be free from sexual attentions of adults against the right of children freedom of sexual development. We should look at laws that consider how to balance these effectively. If there was a big movement calling for the abolition of the age of consent we would have to counter this by defending it. Such a campaign doesn't exist so we should look at current laws and try to improve them.

Jill M: want to speak about point 4 of Gerry's motion on virtual reality images. I don't accept that banning this would be an infringement of freedom of expression. The fact is that these images are inciting a encouraging abuse of children. There is evidence that adults who have the need to view child pornography will want to go further. We should not take risks given that such evidence may exist.

Magda Boo: I have worked as an advisor in this area. Both amendments are rather abstract – they do not deal with the reality of child sex abuse which takes place more in families. I do not agree with

hierarchies of abuse. Neither do I agree with the idea of cycle of abuse as the evidence is very unclear in this area. I would like to add material that stresses the need to fund schemes in this area as funding at the moment is pitiful. We also need proper research into areas of abuse, especially on the causes of abuse as we can end up making matters worse. We need to work on education, especially amongst young boys.

Clive Bradley: Firstly on the treatment of perpetrators. Some programs have had some impact, for example some work done in prisons seems to have some success. The general principle that we try to correct people's behaviour is right. Secondly, on simulated images, I do feel that it is a little worrying that we make criminals of people who are looking at something where a crime is not actually taking place. Finally, on the age of consent, the law should not be used for prosecutions, but it is perfectly reasonable for someone under a certain age not to have to prove that they didn't consent. An age of consent law is a valuable protection.

Helen Russell: On simulation – the manufacturers of such imagery should certainly be prosecuted. Even if there is not any abuse these images are encouraging abuse, justifying it. People shouldn't be able to justify looking at such imagery by saying its not real. In this situation we should be on the side of caution.

Mark Sandell: we are not anarchists – we believe in laws. The most dangerous situation for children is within the family. Lots of porn can be condemned because of the violent and degrading images they show – but are we in favour of banning it. We are not experts but do we trust the experts – views are so varied in the field of psychology. I support Gerry's part 4 on that page.

Martyn Hudson: The letter in the Weekly Worker was a hoax. But the section on age of consent is in the youth section of Weekly Worker. We have to be careful that we do not capitulate to bigotry on these issues. Weekly Worker, for all its faults, is trying to develop a democratic understanding of this issue.

Kate Ahrens (in summary): We should certainly not miss the importance of the family in denying children's rights to free development, sexual or otherwise. The debate has moved on a lot since our position in 1983, the hysteria in the press on paedophilia etc. So we certainly need to clarify our position. On the procedural position I think we should not vote for anything today

Gerry B (in summary): I agree we need to broaden the debate, especially around the role of the family. But child pornography, paedophilia will still be the most contentious area. An exhibition in the Tate showed a series of photos showing naked children (the artist's) in masks. There was hysteria in the media – but I would not be in favour of banning such expression – cutting edge art.

Janine Booth: what does the 1983 motion say? There was no clear answer to this.

Vote on whether to accept Bruce R's procedural motion. Lost

Vote on Martin's procedural motion: Carried.

THE NEW TEMPO

Sean M: We are in a new situation. There is the fantastic anti-war movement, the anti-capitalist movement and the revival or real trade unionism fighting for working class interests. But we do not know how its going to develop. Its possible that Iraq will collapse quickly and Bush/Blair will claim big victory. Even if this happens there will still be a big residue of the current ferment.

The big problem is that the left is in real turmoil. People who cannot show anything other than hostility to Saddam have lost the plot. But the domination of the SWP is also our fault in not being able to give it an effective lead. We do have an educated cadre who can handle the arguments. We have rediscovered authentic Marxism. We have a spread throughout the country. However, we have a malaise - satisfaction in what we've done but insufficient ambition. We don't drive hard enough to recruit people. The SWP give out membership cards in a crass way but we are the mirror image of this. In this situation with a big upsurge we are in danger of missing the boat. On Ken Livingstone and the

local government left we were right. In the 1930's Trotsky warned accurately about the rise of Nazism – but he and his supporters could not effect the situation. We have been right but not effectively right. With an educated party that is capable of recruiting loose people and educating them into effective cadre. In the early 1900's Lenin argued for a very tight definition of the party. But in 1905 he had to convince party members that the situation had changed and the party could be more open about membership in a revolutionary situation. We are in a similar situation today and should follow Lenin's example. We could double our membership in a year with a more ambitious approach. With a strong central cadre we can afford to take chances without risking dilution.

Addition to New Tempo document

Martin Thomas: Problem of comrades with small children. Firstly, we have to make sure that the basic norms of the organisation are maintained. This should allow for maximum participation of those with difficult personal circumstances. The period we have been through can certainly wear people down. But if this leads to lower activity and this sets the pace of the branch, young people coming in will be put off. In the anti-war movement we will recruit by our positive activity which includes making criticism. We must be people who are confident and are out to get things done.

Tom Cashman (reference back of New Tempo document) I don't oppose recruiting people. But I am opposed to substituting activity for analysis. We will destroy the organisation if we become like a religious revivalist group. Our primary business is propaganda and education. We are a small propaganda group. We should not recruit from the anti-war movement only to find them useless from the point of changing the labour movement.

Sean M (in opposition to reference back) Obviously to be an active socialist you have to be convinced. But what keeps people going is horror of capitalism – we have to appeal to such people. All socialist groups have done that. The Bolsheviks did that.

Janine Booth: Against Tom's reference back. We are not swamped by happy clappers. We need new people and we are capable of educating them. As an organisation we find it very difficult to present our ideas except in contrast with the rest of the left. We must not forget how to talk politics to working class people – this does not mean changing politics, but it does mean clarifying the basics. We are a victim of our own strength – the understanding that the world is sophisticated and complicated. We need to be clearer about what the point of our existence is.

Mark Osborn: It is important to recognise what's happening in the movement. On the demo many people had no idea about issues like Israel/Palestine. We need to recognise that situation – the nature of the current radicalisation etc. In the anti-war movement the opportunity to recruit will not last long so we need to move fast. In student work we have to do more entry work in existing organisations like People and Planet.

Matt Cooper: It's wrong to call ourselves a propaganda group – we are a fighting propaganda group. We try to demonstrate what our politics mean in practice. Through this we can be a small lever that moves a big wheel – we can make a difference beyond our size. Secondly, calling for more analysis is pretty pointless unless we get more people around us.

Daniel Randall: Only just joined but it seems to me that too much of what we are doing is directed at the revolutionary left and not the wider movement. Such a situation is a denigration to our organisation. We need to put forward our politics independently to people who are not already in or around the revolutionary left.

Jill Mountford: We will not achieve much through exaltation alone – but as an organisation we must rally people from where they are to where they need to be. Central point is about talking to people about socialism, about the world in which they live and how to change it. I think we are out of practice at doing this. The war gives us an opportunity to change this – we must make the best of the opportunity it offers. The demo was a clear illustration that people want to talk about the world – we got a good hearing for what we had to say. We must offer people activity beyond the war – inhabitable branches etc.

Gerry B: Support the reference back. This is about the kind of organisation of what we want to build. Much of what has been said is not in the document, which doesn't do what it says on the tin. Our review of the year doesn't look at the decisions we took and take account of them. Bolshy has come out but 8 months after we said it should. Again there is no accountability. The document is mainly about exaltation and doesn't take account of where we've been and what we have or have not done.

Martin Thomas (summary): There are a number of specific ideas in the document that we should be either for or against.

1. There are possibilities to recruit in a new situation.
2. We have to recruit people beyond simply showing that our politics are right.
3. We should be more direct in asking people to join.
4. We should make things easier for people with difficult circumstances to participate in well organised, politically well focussed branches.

Tom Cashman (summary) If we had to drop everything but the mag, we should drop everything. Marx was a scientist who introduced reason to the study of human life. Our job is to explain to people how to take control of their lives.

Sean M (summary) The document has a whole series of positive recommendations. It is not gospel, it is a rough indication of what we should be doing. Referring back is destructive, because it presents no alternative that accounts for what has happened in the movement. We can appear as simply the negative of the SWP whereas we need to get across what we positively stand for. However, we cannot be positively independent without relating to the SWP as they are responsible for much of the current direction of the anti-war movement. We should set ourselves a high goal. We have a solid cadre in a position to safely recruit. We are not just a propaganda group, we need to emphasise growth as we represent a better form of Marxism than anything that exists around us.

Reference back – defeated.

Addition – carried overwhelmingly

Document – carried overwhelmingly.

Session 2

Minutes by Janine Booth

THE AWL AND THE REVOLUTIONARY LEFT

Martin Thomas introduced, arguing that:

- socialists need organisation: 'independent socialist' is a contradiction in terms
- the working class needs consciousness: there needs to be a socialist organisation that learns lessons from previous struggles
- the reason the AWL exists as a distinct group is that the rest of the left has not learned lessons of those struggles eg the experience of the Iranian revolution
- we want all socialists to be in one organisation, so we have to argue about the political basis for unity
- we should not give up on people who are in other groups
- things are quiet in the Socialist Alliance because of the way that the SWP handles it
- we have not properly implemented our decision last year to build more international contacts: we should do

Gerry Byrne moved her amendment on labour representation and the Socialist Alliance

- the SA failed the two major tests of recent months – the war and the firefighters' strike – despite the AWL's proposals for SA activity
- the failure of an SA paper (official or unofficial) to materialise

Gerry Byrne moved her amendment on international work

- because of our politics, we have a special responsibility to seek out co-thinkers in other countries

- we have made good links and propaganda through No Sweat
- we have made other contacts through the internet
- it is vital to make contacts in the Muslim world
- the political questions in Latin America are posed very sharply eg independent working-class politics vs facile anti-Americanism; anti-neo-liberalism vs anti-capitalism

Bruce moved his amendment on international work, laying out two directions:

- practical solidarity with groups in eg Pakistan, Indonesia, moving to dialogue to an organised, politically-defined network
- the need to establish an international Workers' Liberty platform

Laurent from Debat Militant (France) addressed the conference, covering:

- the political situation in France following the Presidential election
- reactionary policies from the state purporting to be 'against crime'
- the rise of working-class militancy
- the collapse of the Communist Party and the complicity of the Socialist Party, creating space for the far left to be heard as the voice of opposition to the government
- the rapid growth of the LCR and the need to educate new members
- the need to seek unity between LCR, Lutte Ouvriere and other groups

At this point, this debate was suspended until after lunch, and the conference moved to

NATIONAL COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS

Vicki Morris reported from the Nominating Commission and presented their recommendations to the conference

Comrades put forward the case for candidates, particularly those not on the recommended list

Matt Cooper spoke for Jim Denham

Cathy Nugent spoke for Chris Hickey

Bruce Robinson spoke for Chris Hickey and Jim Denham

Janine Booth spoke for Nick Holden

Sean Matgamna spoke for Chris Hickey and Jim Denham

Kate Ahrens spoke for Nick Holden

Maria Exall spoke for Tom Cashman

Mick Duncan spoke for Jim Denham

John Bloxam spoke for Jim Denham, Chris Hickey and Duncan Morrison

Mark Osborn spoke for Jim Denham and Chris Hickey

Pete Radcliff spoke for all the new candidates

Mark Osborn and Faz Velmi also argued that the use of a Nominating Commission has skewed this debate towards motivations for comrades left off the list and should not be used in future

Laim Conway replied on behalf of the Nominating Commission

Mike Chair - After lunch

AWL and the revolutionary left contd.

Debate: DN against labr repn/sa alliance amendmt by GB – we cannot predict the demise of the sa: stw looked on its last legs last autumn... look at it now.

MR for GB's amendmt

NB pro GB. PR anti GB.

JB summation on labr repn. Amendment.

Waived summations on BR and GB international work.

MT reply to JB. For supporting main motion, BR's amendment, and GB's amendment. Wants vote in parts and not vote for last sentence. "by the next election..."

Reply to MT's motion to take in parts by J Booth. 1 minute.

Vote on parts.

To delete removing the last sentence. Motion carried.

Vote on the amendment as amended.

Passed.

Vote on international work by GB. Passed.

Vote on international work by BR. Passed.

Vote on substantial motion. Carried.

Procedural motion by CN to refer to NC the child labour debate to be voted at first meeting. And justification: to avoid two inadequate debates; prefers debate on w/c representation.

Speech against remittal by FV.

Defeated.

Child labour

CN proposes EC motion.

DB proposes his wording on pt 2.

TC proposes his amendment.

Debate: KA pro DB and against TC.

JM sympathy with TC.

FV

Vote: TC amendment: defeated.

CN rewording of pt 2. Passed.

Whole motion: with new pt. 2. Carried.

Working-class representation and trade union political funds debate

Chair: Nick H.

John Bloxam intro and accepts TR and MT amendment/reformulation.

ME proposes her amendments.

TR proposes his amendment.

Debate: CH pro ME amendmt 1 and 2; AP pro ME; Tim R pro ME and TR amendmt; Mike K pro ME amendment 1 and TR amendmt. Kate A pro ME amendmts 1 and 2, against 3; Tom C pro ME amendmts and TR; Mark S against ME amendmts.

Summations: ME and JB.

Reformulation: voted

Amendmt 1 passed

Amendmt 2 failed

Amendmt 3 failed

TR amendmt passed

Motion as amended

Announcements:

- SO cttee: Tony Byrne, Lynne Moffat, Charlie McDonald proposed: accepted
- Disputes cttee: Vicki, Hannah, Pat Yarker: accepted

NC results on display

Closing speech: Liam Conway.