



Make a working-class slate for London with the RMT!

On Thursday 27 September the London Transport Regional Council of the rail union RMT voted to call on the union to "draw up lists of candidates to stand in the London mayoral elections and GLA elections in 2008.

"These lists should be drawn from RMT members, socialists, anti-capitalists, local campaign groups, etc...[and] speak to the many different issues facing workers, working-class communities and oppressed groups in London, such as education, the health service, housing, a living wage and trade union rights - while of course making the demand for a 100% publicly owned, democratically controlled, integrated and cheap public transport system central".

In the event, the RMT union executive decided not to go ahead with the plan. It concluded that there wasn't enough momentum of support from the labour movement and left.

Part of the reason is that there had been a vocal minority in the Regional Council arguing against the RMT initiating a list. That minority was led by the SWP, saying that the electoral arena was already "full up" because of Respect's plans to stand.

In the wake of the Galloway split, Respect should reconsider this stance.

It should approach the RMT, say that it was wrong back in September, and ask the RMT executive to reconsider the issue on the basis that Respect and the SWP will participate in a joint list energetically and enthusiastically.

It should put out an appeal to other trade-union and left organisations to join in this call on the RMT to reconsider.

Respect should do this:

● Because it is the right thing. Trade-unionists striving to regain a political voice after the disenfranchisement which New Labour has forced on them should be

supported and encouraged, not opposed.

● Because it would open the possibility of a genuine broad working-class and left-wing challenge (within which, of course, Marxists could make clear their own ideas). Realistically, a Respect-only effort will amount to the SWP and a few allies "pretending" to be a broad front, and thus have as its main result only a blurring of socialist political profile.

● Because it would win more support against Livingstone and New Labour.

● Because it would turn Respect in the direction of a proper left-wing and working-class alliance - a fresh direction after the debacle of the alliance with Galloway to develop a "party for Muslims" (as Respect described itself in 2004 election leaflets).

● Because a Mayor/GLA challenge will cost about £30,000. To do it just as a publicity stunt is not a good use of resources.

Lindsay German was right to restate the need for a left challenge to Ken Livingstone. Contrast George Galloway's defence of "Red Ken" (as he still calls him) and his appeal for a "Progressive List" (the title the Liberals formerly used in local government) on the vaguest basis to contest GLA seats but back Livingstone.

But let's do the job seriously, on a genuine working-class and socialist basis.

London AWL forum: Where is Pakistan going?

Thursday 21 February, 7.30pm.

Union Tavern, 52 Lloyd Baker St, off Farringdon Road, near Kings X.

Speaker: Faryal Velmi.
