

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

REPORT OF
ANNUAL DELEGATE MEETING 1981

NOTE: This Report of the 1981 Annual Delegate Meeting has been produced under unusual circumstances. Com. J. Miles, who was General Secretary at the time of the ADM, is no longer the General Secretary, and no minutes have been received from him for the 1981 ADM. As a result, we have had to make use of a tape recording of the ADM (which unfortunately only covers the second day) in order to compile a report. The report of the second day is quite comprehensive and we trust that comrades will find it informative; the report of the first day consists of a list of sub-committee reports which were considered and floor resolutions which were carried. We apologise for the fact that this is not a complete report of the ADM: a complete report of Conference 1982 should be circulated to members by June of this year.

A. Atkinson, General Secretary,
p.p. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

LIST OF REPORTS CONSIDERED AT ADM 1981:

Auditors	General Secretary
*Ballot Committee	Groups Organiser
*Book Department	Head Office Assistant
*Canteen Committee	Library Committee
*Central Literature Sales Committee	*Literature Account Secretary
*Central Branch Secretaries	New Pamphlets Committee
*Central Organiser	*Overseas Contacts Secretary
*Education Committee	*Parliamentary Committee
*Education Organiser	*Premises Committee
*Estates Management Committee	Press Officer
*Forms 'A' Scrutiny Committee	Propaganda Committee
*Publicity Committee	*Propaganda Information Bank
*Review Journals Secretary	Socialist Standard Production Committee
*Socialist Standard Subscribers' Committee	*Standing Orders Committee
Tapes Committee	*Party Funds Organiser

* denotes no written report submitted prior to preparation of EC Report to ADM 1981

/ Post not filled

FLOOR RESOLUTIONS PASSED (other than those recorded in the following minutes of the second day's proceedings) :

1. "This ADM recommends the EC to examine itself, or set up an ad-hoc committee to examine, ways in which Central Branch could be re-organised, or its members re-allocated." CARRIED 18 - 0
2. "This ADM recommends the EC to purchase or hire modern office equipment for the use of members attending H.O. to do Party work (by equipment it is meant photocopiers, typewriters, etc. as appropriate)" CARRIED 18 - 2
3. "That the Library Committee be recommended to implement the recommendation in its report to 1981 ADM that library books be borrowable for 6 months." CARRIED 22 - 0

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF SECOND DAY OF ADM - SUNDAY, 11th OCTOBER, 1982 10.30 a.m.

N.W. LONDON branch item re EC control of literature: "Does the EC have control (as laid down in Rule 17) over the NPC in the production of leaflets and pamphlets i.e. power to edit and amend draft texts?"

A. Kerr (EC member) suggested that members should read the drafts of NPC literature. The SS is not vetted by the EC and it regularly contains errors, e.g. wrong statement on front cover of September SS. 14 heads are better than three. There is a conflict between the 1981 Conference decision and the rule book. The old procedure did enable EC to edit texts quickly, e.g. the Polish statement which was produced in three weeks. Content more important than style.

H. Young (EC member) stated that there should be less ill-feeling. If Conference said that 2 plus 2 equals 5 he would implement it or resign from EC. Whole business started because EC got itself into a terrible tangle over editing lit. Old procedure of EC editing cripples style. Suggestions: (i) set up a consultative committee to advise on literature; (ii) send all drafts to branches - this would take a long time; (iii) abolish the EC and buy a computer!

FLOOR RESOLUTION: C. Slapper (Islington) and S. McLeavy (Islington)

"This ADM recommends the EC to carry out the 1981 Conference instructed resolution re the NPC, which is fully in line with Rule 17; (2) to carry out the NPC terms of reference which state that leaflets and short pamphlets must be commissioned by the EC and then edited by the NPC, and longer pamphlets must be commissioned by the EC and then edited by the EC itself; (3) to consider all leaflets and pamphlets before they are published, in line with Rule 17, and to advise the NPC by resolution of any point in the text which are considered to be in need of amendment because they are in error; (4) to bear in mind the need of the Party, as expressed by instructed resolution at Conference 1980 and by floor resolution at ADM 1980, for regular production of leaflets and pamphlets which can help in the urgent task of increasing working class consciousness."

C. Slapper (Islington) stated that his branch was concerned that an instructed resolution was passed, but EC members refused to implement it. He referred to their reasons for this: (i) errors in NPC texts. Why don't those who speak of errors be clear about them? The text on the front of the September SS was from Marx. (ii) Alleged conflict with Rule 17. Com. Vanni dealt with that yesterday. (iii) claim that old procedure was more efficient than present one, but under old procedure leaflets for distribution in Consett and Cowley were seriously delayed.

P. Deutz (East London) said that EC members should be allowed to justify their actions. Objected to the suggestion that EC members are unqualified to edit lit. EC members are not acting as a clique. The delay was not just the fault of the EC. NPC caused some delays too. Condemned terms of certain recent circulars.

V. Vanni (Glasgow) said that London members were too one-sided. The six EC members had made offensive statements in their circular. Members are willfully ignoring what Rule 17 says. Conference resolution does not detract from EC control. The EC can sack the SSPC and the NPC.

D. Davies (EC member) referred to minutes of the EC meetings since Conference. It was not only six EC members who were deferring consideration of NPC texts. Go back to your branches and look at the minutes; find out the truth.

R. Cook (Birmingham, NPC) The NPC's terms of reference were only passed 6 - 5. NPC is trying to provide increased rate of literature as asked for by Conference and ADM. Certain EC members opposed Conference decision and EC decided terms of reference for NPC. Whether theory of crises in 'Is a Third World War Inevitable?' (ITWWI) is wrong is open to interpretation. Party has debated theory of crises for a long time. Information given by previous speaker was correct, but partial: it made no reference to delays on unemployment leaflet.

P. Lawrence (Croydon) asked whether ITWWI was submitted to the EC in its final form.

R. Cook replied that the NPC was confused about the EC's position towards it, but he did not see the draft as being the final version.

C. Marsh (Guildford) reminded delegates not to lose sight of the Party's objective. We publish literature to make members. Last Conference the Party decided to adopt a new strategy for producing pamphlets for short-term distribution. Need to be tolerant and let the EC and NPC get used to the new policy.

EC MEMORANDUM (Cont'd)

Education Committee stated the bulletins were not sent; they maintained a mailing list for those members who especially want otherwise a few were sent to each branch; at the end of each bulletin go to the branch and see if they have been sent; if not, they were tried.

S. Coleman the pamphlet 3 - 5,000 not vetted J. Miles (a)

B. Coleman (EC member, NPC) stated that he was prepared to endorse the contents of the pamphlet, although accepts now that there may have been some mistakes. Only 3 - 5,000 copies were going to be produced - as many as the monthly SS which is not vetted by the EC.

J. Miles (General Secretary) stated that he had thought that ITWWI draft was final version.

K. Knight (EC member). Some good material in ITWWI which could be used in SS. Contains a number of mistakes which conflict with present 'War' pamphlet. EC was misinformed about ITWWI.

C. May (EC member) gave a list of leaflets which EC had published. Resolution conflicts with Conference resolution because it allows EC to see drafts of leaflets and short pamphlets. More concerned with accuracy than style. Gave excerpts of mistakes in ITWWI.

AMENDMENT to FLOOR RESOLUTION: C. Moss (Swansea) and R. Cook (Birmingham):

"That this ADM recommends that the duty of the NPC is to adhere to the 1981 Conference instructed resolution, that it operates like the SSFC in the production of leaflets and short pamphlets, i.e. that it be under the control of the EC, but that, for reasons of speed and efficiency, it not be obliged to have its texts vetted by the EC before printing."

C. Moss (Swansea) said that the amended resolution was democratic in that it reaffirms decision of majority at Conference 1981.

A. Kerr (Camden) said that Conference 1981 did not amend Rule 17, so this motion was not necessarily doing what the majority wanted.

E. Goodman (EC member) Rules are made by Conference resolutions and subsequent Conference resolutions supercede them. EC members should have copies of NPC texts, read them and let NPC know what they think.

A. Atkinson (EC member) stated that the rule book is clear. Party should publish and be damned; if procedure does not work, change it. NPC did not come to EC with final draft of ITWWI.

J. Howell (EC member) Some of the complaints about ITWWI are based on what is not said rather than what is said. Untrue that solar energy projects make huge profits; they are miniscule in comparison with other energy industries.

G. Kerr (EC member) Untrue that clique is holding back work of EC. Cannot implement Conference resolution. ITWWI contains many errors, e.g. 'War is artificially produced'. Rule 17 has existed since 1904 and we should not alter it.

J. Knight (N.W. London) asked why ITWWI was submitted to the EC.

C. McEwan (Glasgow) objected to the discussion about ITWWI. We should be discussing procedure, not specific texts which most delegates have not read.

The vote was taken: AMENDMENT - CARRIED 16 - 8; SUB.-RES. CARRIED 17 - 7

At 1.30 p.m. the delegates adjourned for lunch.

The afternoon session commenced at 2.30 p.m. Con. Lester (AGS) referred delegates to an EC resolution re the venue for the forthcoming special meeting on the Party Poll. J. Bell and R. Mitchell of the Premises Committee proposed that we hire a larger venue than H.O.

FLOOR RESOLUTION: H. Cottis (Southend) and R. Cook (Birmingham)

"That the EC be recommended to hold the special meeting at Head Office."

CARRIED 20 - 3

E.C. REPORT.

PUBLICITY COMMITTEE: A. Gibb (Haringey) gave brief verbal report from the committee and chair read a copy of committee's report to ADM.

R. Cook (Birmingham) suggested that the committee should send a copy of "Questions of the Day" to enquirers, as branch had found that SS did not give a full enough picture.

A. Kerr (Camden) said SS should give enquirers a full picture.

H. Cottis (Southend) asked how soon do branches receive names/addresses of enquirers in their areas. A. Gibb said it takes a few weeks.

OVERSEAS CONTACTS SECRETARY. D. Davies (Lit. Sec.) reported that the WSP had not paid their lit. account for 2 years.

FLOOR RESOLUTION: R. Cook (Birmingham) and C. Moss (Swansea): was moved and later withdrawn in favour of another RESOLUTION: R. Mitchell (S.W. London and M. Sansum (S.W. London):

"That the lit. account of the WSP of US be waived until the end of the year."

CARRIED 20 - 1

E. Grant (Islington) suggested that the EC should send a fraternal delegate to the WSP.

FLOOR RESOLUTION: E. Grant (Islington) and P. Wilson (Southend):

"This ADM recommends the EC to send a delegate to the WSP of US to seek ways and means of helping them in their present difficulties."

F. Lawrence (Croydon) stated that it would be just as well to phone them.

RESOLUTION LOST 6 - 15

FLOOR RESOLUTION: S. Ross (N.W. London) and E. Grant (Islington):

"That the matter be referred to the EC for urgent attention. The EC be asked to also contact the Socialist Party of Canada." CARRIED 23 - 0

FLOOR RESOLUTION: E. Grant (Islington) and C. Slapper (Islington):

"That this ADM views with favour the idea that the Party should take a stand at the Fete of the Luttee Ouvriere in June 1982." CARRIED 19 - 0

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE:

R. Cook (Birmingham) urged the committee to begin preparations for the next general election.

H. Cottis (Southend) Who are the parliamentary candidates going to be?

K. Knight (EC member) asked what preparations Bolton have made and what help the committee was able to give Croydon branch re the bye-election.

E. Grant (Islington) replied for the Parliamentary Committee. Com. Coleman had been adopted as candidate for Bolton West. Bolton has been very active in canvassing the area. Com. Howell of the Propaganda Committee has liaised with Croydon branch.

H. Cottis (Southend) stated that it is important to begin election campaign well in advance.

C. Slapper (Islington) expressed disappointment that more London members had not helped in recent GLC campaign in Islington South.

PARTY FUNDS ORGANISER: PREMISES COMMITTEE: PRESS OFFICER: No discussion.

PROPAGANDA COMMITTEE: No discussion on report, but three items on agenda related to it:

PADDINGTON BRANCH: "The need to plan in advance for the Marx Centenary."

E. Young (EC member) was permitted to open on behalf of the branch. CP charges ELO for its Marxist universities, but we are the only people who can do justice to Marx. Need to nominate a committee of six. Monthly lecture programme to be drawn up and transcripts of lectures to be published.

R. Cox (Guildford) Party should stress where we disagree with Marx. How about a pamphlet on 'Where Marx was Wrong'?

J. Knight (N.W. London) Branch favours producing a special issue of the SS in which there will be advert for a series of four meetings on Marxism.

H. Cottis (Southend) suggested that we contact the BBC with a view to appearing on special programmes dealing with Marx.

A. Waite (Camden) informed delegates that the TES will be publishing a special issue.

B. Johnson (Central, Cardiff) said that he was ashamed of lack of interest in this idea in the Party.

S. Ross (S.W. London) favoured an outdoor meeting in Hyde Park at the time of the Centenary. We should use the event as an occasion to spread our ideas.

ISLINGTON BRANCH: "The Growing popularity of CMD and the Party's response."

S. McLeavy (Islington) stated that the SPGB should aim to attract people from CMD. Need for meetings, debates, pamphlets, leaflets, stating our unique case on war and CMD.

C. Cox (Guildford) CMD members are often emotionally involved in what they are doing. We should be more conciliatory instead of putting them down.

H. Cottis (Southend) tries to contact as many CMDers as possible. They seem to get more letters in local press than we do.

A. Kerr (Camden) We must attack CMD. We have a hostility clause.

A. Waite (Camden) urged members to attend CMD demonstrations to sell SS. Best not to attack them but to win them over.

ISLINGTON BRANCH: "Should the Party continue to describe exploitation of the working class as robbery and capitalism as the profit system, despite the view of certain EC members that this should be stopped?"

C. Slapper (Islington) Branch raised this in response to recent EC resolution that SS should not refer to robbery of workers until EC has decided on the matter. Islington supports position as stated in October 1931 SS, i.e. that workers are legally robbed. Many references to robbery of workers in Party pamphlets. EC members should not use EC to raise petty objections.

R. Cook (Birmingham) We should use free expression to state correct ideas, otherwise we will turn Party case into religious dogma.

S. Ross (N.W. London) We should use the best terms available to us.

G. Kerr (EC member) This is too trivial to be on the agenda. Profit system is being referred to in recent lit. to the exclusion of wages system. Many people believe that there are countries with wages and no profits. By saying 'profit system' we are lining up with the CP.

S. Coleman (EC member) The Party has adopted different styles in different periods. Party lit. in early days was bold and vigorous; some of the recent lit. is conservative and mealy-mouthed. Party should be uncompromising in its language. Crux of our propaganda should be the point that workers are robbed of the fruits of their labour: class war is inherent to capitalism. Labour power is not like other commodities because it has consciousness. Party case is watered down by those who aim to separate it from what workers are saying and doing.

K. Knight (EC member) pointed out that Coleman had written three circulars on the matter but he had only written two. Only two members had replied to his circular. October 1931 article was based on obscure definition of robbery. Robbery can be referred to on the outdoor platform but not in lit. In 1975 the SSFC replied to a correspondent that workers are not robbed. In 1973 in "Are the Workers Cheated" the answer given was "No". We cannot argue that commodities sell at their value and that labour power is different from other commodities. If we accept the robbery analysis we are no longer a Marxist party.

C. McEwan (Glasgow) said that in different circumstances words have different meanings. A couple of lines of algebra could explain the exploitation process, but that would not attract the workers at Exchange Square. Use whatever expressions, people will understand.

FLOOR RESOLUTION: C. Slapper (Islington) and E. Grant (Islington): "This ADM is of the view that there is nothing wrong with the traditional Party case that profits are created as a result of the legalised robbery of the working class at the point of production: there is nothing wrong with the traditional party case that capitalism may be referred to as the profit system: that members of the EC should not attempt to alter or delete traditional Party terminology, but should raise their objections through their branches.

A. Kerr (Camden) favoured the use of the terms referred to but wanted to delete reference to EC members raising the matter in their branches.

In summing up, C. Slapper referred to Clause 8 of the D of P which refers to the system which deprives workers of the fruits of their labours. As Socialists we should reject capitalist moralising about the meaning of robbery.

RESOLUTION CARRIED 21 - 4

General Secretary reported that no fraternal greetings had been received from Companion Parties.

IT WAS AGREED that fraternal greetings should be sent to our Companion Parties.

THE E.C. REPORT TO ADM was not completed, but it was moved:

H. Cottis (Southend) and A. Kerr (Camden) "That the EC Report to ADM be adopted."

THIS WAS AGREED

FLOOR RESOLUTION: C. Slapper (Islington) and E. Grant (Islington):

"That the Chair be thanked." THIS WAS AGREED

THE ADM ADJOURNED at 5 p.m.