

S O C I A L I S T P A R T Y O F G R E A T B R I T A I N

REPORT of the 32nd Annual Conference held at Fairfax
Hall Harringay on Friday and Saturday 10th and
11th April 1936.

PROCEEDINGS OF FIRST DAY.

The Conference was called to order by the General
Secretary at 11.15 a.m.

ITEM 1

Election of Chairman. A. Kohn (Bloomsbury)

Election of Vice-Chairman. G. Hings (Leyton)

ITEM 2

Election of Tellers.
O.C. Iles and A.S. Collinson.

Comrades S. Stewart and F. Evans were appointed
Stewards by the Conference.

ITEM 3.

Report of the Standing Orders Committee.

The Standing Orders Committee reported that
there were 32 Delegates present representing 15 Branches.

They further reported that an additional sheet
of the Agenda had been prepared for the Conference.
This contained one amendment to resolution, and five
items for discussion which had been accidentally
omitted from the Agenda.

RESOLUTION Coffin & Ewbank

"That the report of the Standing Orders
Committee be adopted" Carr. 32-0

Order of Business.

It was suggested that Item 5 viz. "Resolutions"
be taken early in the day as most delegates were in
attendance on Friday.

RESOLUTION Lako & Guy

"That Item 5 be taken first item after lunch"

There followed a suggestion that "items for discussion"
and "resolutions" be taken when relevant points arose
in the E.C.'s report.

After some discussion the Resolution was carried

20-2

Standing Orders Committee further reported that there
were now present 36 delegates representing 17 Branches.
East Ham Branch, being of less than six months standing,
could be seated only by permission of the Conference.

RESOLUTION Groves & Lako.

"That the East Ham Delegates be allowed to sit"
Carr. 31-0

REPORT OF THE 32ND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

(1) Attendances No Action

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE 1935.(a) NEW PREMISES.

It was agreed to take the report of the Premises Committee with this item.

During discussion it was suggested that the E.C. should give full details (accommodation required, maximum outgoings, etc.) to Branches when asking for members to obtain particulars of prospective new premises. Further, that a full statement be inserted in the "S.S." explaining why we were compelled to renew lease of old premises.

RESOLUTION Groves & Curtis

"That this Conference recommends the E.C. to insert periodically in the "S.S." a "write-up" referring to the New Premises Fund.

The Editorial Committee pointed out that they were already under instructions of the E.C. to do what the resolution indicated.

The Resolution, however, was put to the vote and carried 28-2

Considerable discussion ensued around the question of the capacity and the venue required of new premises. On the one hand it was urged that a West Central London position was desirable even to the extent of taking a single floor of a big block of Offices (on a separate lease)

In contrast to this, it was argued that a West Central London position would involve such a considerable increase in rent etc. as to stultify other activities of the Party.

The criticism was made that the present premises were not being used to advantage, but no suggestions for improvement were advanced.

It was generally agreed that the Party were committed to obtain new premises in view of the Fund inaugurated for that purpose.

(b) E.C. RULING ON N.U.W.M.

It was agreed that the "item for discussion" standing in the name of Bloomsbury branch should be taken with this item.

The Bloomsbury delegates advanced the view that an organization should be judged by its essential characteristics. They were of the opinion that the N.U.W.M. was not a political party but on the other hand it was an objectionable organization to which our members should ~~associate~~.^{NOT} Other non-political organizations were cited as examples of those with which association would be prohibited.

Islington Branch indicted the E.C. for clouding the issue by the ambiguity of its ruling. Definite evidence had been obtained that the N.U.W.M. had run candidates at certain local elections.

1 p.m. Conference adjourned for luncheon
2.10 p.m. Resumed

Standing Orders Committee reported that 43 Delegates representing 20 Branches were now present.

The Conference proceeded to take ITEM 5.

RESOLUTIONS.

(CHISWICK BRANCH) "That immediately following the closing of the NEW PREMISES FUND a determined effort be made to augment the PARLIAMENTARY FUND with the object of running Parliamentary candidates at the earliest opportunity"

AMENDMENT
(MANCHESTER BRANCH) "That the words 'Parliamentary candidates at the earliest possible opportunity' be deleted, and the words 'a Parliamentary candidate at the next General Election' be substituted."

AMENDMENT
(SOUTHWARK BRANCH) "That after the words 'earliest opportunity' be added ' and that a suitable district be selected and circularised with a view to securing financial support from that district and measuring the probable support for a socialist candidate' ".

In view of the omission from the agenda of the Amendment of Southwark Branch, it was suggested that no voting should take place at the Conference on the above resolution and amendments.

RESOLUTION Groves & Grainger
"That no voting take place on the resolution of Chiswick Branch or amendments"
Carried 13-11

The Chiswick delegates offered no discussion as they considered that the resolution was self-explanatory. Southwark Branch emphasised the importance of selecting a particular constituency and working exclusively with a view to ascertaining the probable amount of support that would be forthcoming. They contended in reply to a question as to how such support could be measured, that the finance contributed would be an indication of the support that might be expected.

RESOLUTION Reynolds & Walker
"That this Conference determines that at the next General Election a Parliamentary candidate should be put forward by the Party; a suitable constituency to be selected and meanwhile a concerted and consistent propaganda be carried on in the district"

For the resolution it was urged that running a candidate at an election would give a stimulus to members and considerable advertisement to the Party generally. The suggestion to contest local elections preparatory to General Election with a view to gaining experience did not meet with much support in view of the fact that little publicity is obtained through local elections.

AMENDMENT Groves & Curtis

"That the words 'at the next General Election' be deleted"

Lost 10-18.

West Ham was suggested as a possible constituency where the Party might put forward a candidate.

The Resolution was carried 30-3

RESOLUTION Grainger & Waters

"That the Branches be instructed to prepare the necessary organization for contesting municipal elections at the earliest opportunity"

Carried 30-1

RESOLUTION
(SOUTHWARD BRANCH)

"That this Conference instructs the E.C. to carry out a re-distribution of Branches and Branch members. Amalgamation of Branches where necessary, and re-arranging its membership, so that all members except Central Branch members and those exempt by E.C. resolution shall belong to the Branch nearest the district in which they live.

In favour of the resolution it was urged that many small branches weaken the activity of the Party generally, inasmuch as the ordinary routine business is carried on in duplicate or triplicate by a number of Branches situated fairly closely together. In the event of these Branches merging, one set of officials could perform the work for the whole district, and thus release other members to do active propaganda work.

In opposition, it was pointed out that the geographical position of Branches often made it quite impossible to merge the Branches. Another objection is that many members activities would be restricted if they had a distance to travel to their branch.

A further point was made that the Branches generally should ascertain the reasons for non-attendance of members at the Branch and propaganda meetings. A re-distribution of Branches would not correct the trouble if the root cause was left untouched.

The resolution was lost 8-28.

A collection was taken at this point which amounted to £3.10.0.

The Conference now reverted to discussion on the N.U.W.M. question.

It was again stressed by the Bloomsbury delegates that the essential features of a particular organisation should determine the Party's attitude toward it.

The line of demarcation between economic action and political action is often very fine.

RESOLUTION Maclatchie & Hardy.

"That this Conference holds that a political Party is one that is organized to control or participate in the control of governmental power".

Carried 27-3

3. FINANCE.

In reply to a question, the Treasurer stated that "Western Socialists" were exchanged for copies of "S.S." accounting for the absence of any statement of expenditure on "Western Socialists".

At the request of delegates the Treasurer submitted a list of Branches and others who until the end of last year owed sums which totalled over £80.0.0, some of which however had been paid since this report had been compiled.

The Party's liabilities were approximately £62 for "S.S." and £18 rent. The statement of expenditure for "S.S." printing was for 11 months. The collection for New Premises Fund was to date £154.0.0.

The Treasurer replied to several minor items in the Report, and the question of the Publicity Committee not issuing a Balance Sheet of monies received and spent gave rise to the following:-

RESOLUTION Walker & Wood.

"That any report submitted to Conference involving expenditure should be accompanied by a financial statement, whatever be the source of the funds involved"

Carried 32-1

The Conference adjourned at 6 p.m. concluding the proceedings for the day.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SECOND DAY.

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman at 11.15 a.m.

Appointment of Tellers. A. Turner & J. Boucher

Appointment of Stewards. F. Evans & M. Allon

Standing orders committee reported that there were present 25 delegates representing 12 Branches

The Conference continued consideration of Item FINANCE.

RESOLUTION Ewbank & Bowley

"That this Conference recommends the E.C. to ensure that a statement of assets and liabilities appears on a subsequent Financial Statement"

Carried 24-0

RESOLUTION Ewbank & Bowley

"That this Conference recommends the E.C. to arrange that all Party accounts are audited monthly"

Lost 4-17

Parliamentary Fund.

RESOLUTION Maclatchie & Reynolds

"That the E.C. be advised that no money be withdrawn from the Parliamentary Fund except for the purpose of putting forward a Parliamentary Candidate"

Carried 20-0

RESOLUTION Groves & Curtis

"That the 'item for discussion' on Party Funds be taken with the Finance Report"

Carried 12-10

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION
LEYTON BRANCH

That fuller precautions be taken to safeguard Party Funds.

Delegates of Leyton Branch asked permission of the Conference to withdraw the above item. The Conference, however, discussed it in the light of the missing letters from H.O.

RESOLUTION Groves & Curtis
"That the notice in the "S.S." for subscribers should state that all postal orders should be crossed and made payable to the Socialist Party of Great Britain".

Carried 28-1

RESOLUTION Uttin & Boden
"That all replies to appeals be sent to the Party Treasurer and not to any individual"

Owing to the vagueness of the foregoing it was was moved by Reynolds & Waters
"That the matter be referred back to the Southwark Branch"

Carried 28-1

1. p.m. Conference adjourned for lunch
2.20 p.m. Resumed

The Standing Orders Committee reported that there were 34 delegates present representing 18 Branches.

The question was raised on Glasgow Branch's complaint regarding the non receipt of the Final Agenda. The Secretarial Staff assured the Conference that six copies of the Agenda were sent to Glasgow Branch at the same time that all provincial branches were supplied. It was agreed that the Secretary explain the situation to Glasgow Branch.

The Conference continued to consider the item FINANCE.

Following upon a general discussion upon the laxity in which most party and more particularly most branch funds are handled, the following resolutions were moved:-

RESOLUTION Walker & Wood
"That the E.C. be recommended to consider a method of uniform book-keeping for all branches"
Carried 14-3

RESOLUTION Otway & Forster
"That this Conference recommends the E.C. in future that all committees must give the Party auditors a written statement that all tickets and/or receipts have been checked and all tickets not sold have been returned to them"
Agreed

It was agreed at this point to take Items for Discussion in view of the fact that Dagenham delegates had to leave the Conference and they wished to sponsor their Item for Discussion.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION
(DAGENHAM & ROMFORD BRANCH)

That in future no voting take place at the Annual Conference. Resolutions and items for discussion be called for in the Agendas and after Conference discussion items be voted on by post.

The Dagenham delegate outlined the case for supporting the idea. It was pointed out that when resolutions go to the Branches, the delegates receive instructions from their branch which tie their hands at the Conference. Many instances were cited where delegates had come to the Conference in direct

opposition to a particular resolution, and had during the discussion realised that they would like to support it. But in any case their vote must be in accordance with Branch instructions.

The opposers of the item contended that it was dangerous to vest too much power in the hands of delegates, and the branches would cease to have any control over the delegates if a 'free-hand' were given in all cases. Further that the additional work it would entail would make it impossible, although the Secretarial staff, upon whom most of the work would fall, were in favour of the project.

RESOLUTION Otway & Forster

"That the E.C. be recommended to frame up the question to be voted upon, and place it before the next Delegate meeting for approval before taking a Party Vote"

Lost 16-19

Publications
ITEM 5

Editorial Committee's Report

Pamphlet on War.

The Editorial Committee reported that the pamphlet on War would contain approximately 10,000 words and would therefore have to be sold at 2d. (36 pages)

It could be on sale about one month after the E.C. had approved of the size of the pamphlet.

The Committee further stated that no information was to hand regarding the S.P. of C's intention to publish a pamphlet on Social Credit.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

It was agreed to take the following in conjunction with this item.

SOUTHWARK BRANCH

"The possibility of publishing the "S.S." twice a month."

BLOOMSBURY BRANCH

"That this Conference reviews the line of propaganda pursued by the Party both with regard to meetings and to the "Socialist Standard".

Regarding the suggestion to publish the S.S. twice a month, the Editorial Committee stated that insufficient material was received by them, and even were that not the case, the task of editing and correcting proofs, etc. while performed in the spare time of members would be overwhelming. At the present stage, many branches would be unable to sell the S.S. twice a month.

On the Bloomsbury item, Dagenham delegates contended that the present 'make-up' of the "S.S." was too 'high falutin'. They suggested that the Party should publish a second paper on the lines of the Dagenham "News & Views", not as an official organ, but as something additional to the S.S. which would appeal to non-members of the Party who found the S.S. too difficult to assimilate.

The Editorial Committee emphasised the need for maintaining the present standard of articles in the S.S. and condemned the publication of material which was not sound in principle and accurate in statement. The aim of the Party was to keep the issue clear, and not to emulate the practice of other organizations to popularise the organ at the expense of the reputation of the soundness of our

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publications. They were of the opinion that unsound articles should not be circulated either inside or outside of the Party. The complexity of modern political affairs made the simplifying of articles almost an impossibility. They urged new members of the Party to endeavour to write on simple topical events.

Answers to Correspondents.

It was suggested that many answers to correspondents were too curt and that the Editorial Committee should avoid too formal replies.

PUBLICITY COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

RESOLUTION Reynolds & Maclatchie.

"That this Conference recommends the Publicity Committee that advertising on the "Underground" be discontinued."

AMENDMENT Groves & Grainger

"That the Publicity Committee be asked to review the question of Underground advertising and report to the E.C."

Carried 13-10

The Vote was challenged and upon a recount the Amendment was carried 12-11

as a Sub. Res. Carried 14-9

Many suggestions were forthcoming as alternatives for the present method of advertising the "S.S.", one being to pay a newsagent to display the S.S. poster, and/or supply newsagents with the S.S. either freely or below the usual trade rates. Much discussion took place around this point.

RESOLUTION Ross & Conway

"That this Conference recommends the E.C. to advise all Branches to get as many newsagents as possible to display the S.S. poster (which may cost one shilling per month) and take the S.S. on sale or return. Where necessary the Branches to be assisted in the expense by the E.C.

Carried 20-4

S.P.G.B. and Questions of the Day.

The Editorial Committee stated that as soon as the pamphlet on War was published, the No. 11 pamphlet would be revised and reprinted.

6 p.m. Conference adjourned for Tea
6.45 p.m. Resumed.

6. EDUCATION. CLASSES ORGANISER'S REPORT.

The Conference agreed to take the 'item for discussion' standing in the name of Southwark Branch with this item, viz.

SOUTHWARK BRANCH

"To discuss the results and the continuation of educational classes"

Southwark Branch delegates questioned the value of the classes in respect of their making new speakers for the Party. Criticism that the syllabus cramped the style of the lecturer, and that the classes were in fact lectures to Party members approximately covered the attention given to this item.

ITEM 4PROPAGANDAPROPAGANDA COMMITTEE'S REPORT.RESOLUTION Curtis & Groves

"That this Conference considers that the sum of £9.19.11 is wholly inadequate to the needs of the Party, and a much larger sum be allocated for this purpose in the future."

On the ground that the resolution was based upon an inaccurate statement, the Chairman ruled that it was out of order.

RESOLUTION Groves & Curtis.

"That Provincial Propaganda be encouraged to the fullest extent during the coming summer"
Agreed.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSIONBLOOMSBURY
BRANCH

"Is it advisable for the Party to compel speakers to undergo a test before being allowed to speak on behalf of the Party"?

RESOLUTION Reynolds & Hardy.

"That the E.C. be recommended to draw up a list of questions which shall be submitted to all Party Speakers before they are allowed to speak on behalf of the Party"

In favour of the resolution it was contended that a more technical knowledge was necessary for our speakers to enable them to answer satisfactorily questions of a complex nature relevant to world affairs to-day. It must be laid down that the first principle of public speaking is knowledge. The test was not intended to exclude speakers or to frighten the new speaker away. There was no reason why any speaker should not pass the test if he took the trouble of studying.

The main objection to the project was that a rigid speakers test would tend to keep young members off the platform, and some present speakers might not pass which would leave the Speakers list depleted.

The Resolution was carried 16-6

ITEM FOR DISCUSSIONBLOOMSBURY
BRANCH

"Methods of improving the quality and increasing the quantity of indoor and outdoor propaganda"

The Bloomsbury delegate in opening the discussion stressed the growing need for continuous economic and speakers classes. New members should be guided with their studies, so that they may make best use of their studies. The E.C. should set up the necessary machinery for this purpose.

RESOLUTION Hardy & Reynolds.

"That the E.C. be recommended to make provision for the formation of a Speakers Class"

Carried 25-0

There was some discussion around the reason for the failure of the old economic and speakers classes. The suggestion that our members should go to outside institutes was generally turned down on the ground of their inadequacy.

ITEM 7

LIBRARIANS REPORT
SOCIAL COMMITTEE'S REPORT

No action
No action

ITEM 8 MEMBERSHIP

The Conference were given statistics of members joining and leaving the Party.

<u>Reasons for Joining.</u>		<u>Reasons for leaving.</u>	
Personal Contact	16	No reply to letters	17
Rejoined	18	Lost interest	12
Outdoor meetings	31	Never attended Branch mtgs.	4
Indoor meetings	4	Left district	3
Reading literature	15	Resigned (ill health)	2
S.S. in Library	1	Disagreement in Branch	6
Advert. in Herald	1	Deceased	6
Not stated	14	Economic reasons	3
		Domestic "	1
		Disagreement with D.of P.	1
		Not stated	2

It was pointed out that branches are frequently at fault in ignoring the new member until ~~xxx~~ he becomes discouraged and drops out. Although it was shown that the greater number of members who had left the Party in 1935 were in fact members of over 3 years membership. There was no resolution tabled on the matter.

RESOLUTION Atkin & Wilmot
"Next Business"
Carried 19-1

RESOLUTION Atkin & Curtis
"That the Report of the Party Organizer
be taken at the end of the meeting"
Carried 9-5

CENTRAL BRANCH No action

COMPLAINT AGAINST COMRADE TURNER No action

COMPLAINT AGAINST COMRADE ABERDEEN

RESOLUTION Coffin & Jones
"That this Conference holds that the E.C. were out of order in asking Comrade Aberdeen to resign; also that the E.C. were at fault in the manner in which they handled the case"

After some discussion on the resolution
Wilmot & Otway moved

"Next Business"

Lost 5-10

The General Secretary briefly outlined the case upon request.

The resolution was then voted upon and was lost
3-13

At this point Comrade Holt (under urgency) protested against the delay in considering the report of the Central Organizer, from which office he proffered his resignation. It was pointed out that the report was deferred so that the whole of the unexpired time might be spent in considering it.

E.C. RULING ON TOG H. No. action.

PARTIES ABROAD Foreign Secretary submitted a report.

CENTRAL ORGANIZER'S REPORT.

The report was considered paragraph by paragraph, the Organizer answering questions and replying to criticism by delegates.

RESOLUTION Atkin & Hardy.
"That the Report of the E.C. be adopted.
Agreed.

ITEM 6 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION .

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

BLOOMSBURY BRANCH

The principle of reduction of the Executive Committee to about eight members; and of requiring members of the E.C. to stand down for one year after serving for three successive years.

CHISWICK BRANCH

The desirability of reducing the number of E.C. members; and that no member should serve on the E.C. for more than three years successively.

Arising from the above the Bloomsbury Branch moved the following resolution:-

RESOLUTION Reynolds & Hardy
"That a Party Poll be taken to amend rule 12 as follows:-
The executive committee shall consist of eight members elected annually by vote of the Party"

AMENDMENT Coffin & Jones
"That the words 'the E.C. shall be composed of eight members; one third to retire annually' be inserted in place of the last two lines of the Bloomsbury resolution"

Lost 2-25
The resolution was lost 7-14

RESOLUTION Reynolds & Hardy.
"That a poll of the Party be taken on the question:-
That members who have been members of the E.C. for 3 years in succession shall stand down for one year, after which they may be eligible for re-election.
Carried 10-7

The following items for discussion were referred to the September delegate meeting:-

BATTERSEA & TOTTING BRANCH

"That Branches which fail to send in Forms C for four successive quarters shall be considered extinct."

"The advisability of periodical meeting of branch treasurers to discuss Branch finance"

SHEFFIELD BRANCH

"Collections in relation to outdoor propaganda".

CONFERENCE ADJOURNED AT 11.10 P.M.

DELEGATION

<u>BRANCH</u>	<u>FRIDAY</u>	<u>SATURDAY</u>
Battersea	Hayden, Ritchie, Ewbank & Bowloy A.	Bowloy A. Bowloy R. Ewbank
Birmingham	Keller	Keller
Bloomsbury	Kohn, Maclatchio, Hardy, Reynolds	Kohn, Maclatchio, Hardy, Reynolds.
Chiswick	Curtis, Groves	Curtis, Groves
Dagonham & Romford	Bernard, Berry, Waters	Bernard, Berry, Waters
East Ham	Grainger, Barnfield	Grainger, Barnfield
Hackney	Conway, Ross	Conway, Ross
Hamilton	T. Jones	T. Jones
Islington	Allen, Wiltshire	Allen, Gollan
Leyton	Coffin, Jones	Coffin, Jones
Lewisham	Wood, Walker	Wood, Walker
Manchester	Baritz, Atkins	Atkins
Paddington	Veal	Veal
Sheffield	Boden	Boden
Southend	Otway, B. Foster	Otway, B. Foster
Southwark	Grey, Wilmot, Lake	Uttin, Wilmot
Stepney	Kaufman	Kaufman
Tottenham	Field, Hyams	Field, Hyams
West Ham	P. Hallard, M. Hallard, A. Bates, Bredon	P. Hallard, M. Hallard A. Bates, Bredon
Wood Green	Edwards, McKono	Godfrey, F.W.