

On the crisis of the SWP (Britain): Open Letter to SWP CC from trade union activists

Monday 4 February 2013, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 31 January 2013).

We are all union activists who work with SWP members in our union branches, in the various democratic bodies in our unions and in the wider union movement. Some of us have SWP members in our workplaces, some of us participate in SWP led campaigns or vote for SWP members in elections. Many of us, whatever our politics, recognise that our SWP comrades can be relied on to speak up for our class and union members' interests, to be at the forefront of campaigns, to turn up on picket lines, and to support those of us who are victimised for our union activities.

For these reasons, we have not been able to ignore the recent crisis in the SWP. We have been concerned, and at times appalled, as we have heard about complaints being swept under the carpet in 2011, disciplinary committees including close friends of the accused, women quizzed about irrelevant details of their behaviour and drinking habits, SWP members instantly dismissed for discussing these matters, while another member who has been the subject of complaints continues to represent SWP campaigns, and the revelation that the word 'feminist' is used as an insult within the party.

No one is saying that other left organisations have an unblemished record when it comes to dealing with sexism, sexual harrassment, or sexual assault, but the SWP Central Committee now appear to be ignoring the many voices both inside and outside their party who are telling them that they have got it badly wrong. Instead, Alex Callinicos wrote an article that avoided all mention of the women involved, and dismissed accusations of harrassment, and worse, as "gossip". It is clear that the CC are not listening to the significant number of members who are expressing their dismay at recent events.

While many of us welcome the recent open letter from academics and others who speak at SWP events, our message to you is different. We are not saying we won't work with SWP members. That isn't even an option, while we are in the same unions we will of course be working side by side. But, your members are right, it has changed things. We are dismayed, we are appalled, we feel uncomfortable round SWP members unless we know that like many of your members, they are equally appalled.

If the CC continue to respond by ignoring the issue or closing down debate, as well as losing some great activists, you are going to find your remaining members have a harder time organising, campaigning, and making connections with other union members, through no fault of their own, but through the fault of their Central Committee, who are putting them in an impossible position.

Fortunately there is still time to reconsider, and we hope that you do.

All names in a personal capacity.

Glyn Harries, UNISON Local Govt

H. Akram, UNISON Health

H. Smith, GMB

Harry Stephens, UNISON HE

Jack Green, UNISON Local Govt

James Collins, UNISON Health

Jon Rogers, UNISON Local Govt

and UNISON National Executive Committee

Kirstie Paton, NUT

Louise Lambe, UNISON HE

Marshajane Thompson, UNISON Local Govt

and chair of UNISON United Left

Mille Wild, UCU

Naomi Bain, UNISON HE

Phil Dickens, PCS

Richard Brodie, UCU

*If you are a union rep and would like to add your signature, please email
unionopenletterswp gmail.com*

P.S.

<http://internationalsocialismuk.blogspot.fr/2013/01/open-letter-to-swp-cc-from-trade-union.html>