

# One Year of an Undemocratic EC Lockout

## Letter of Resignation from EC and Full-Timer Positions

May 4, 2018

Dear National Committee Comrades,

It has recently come to our attention that Executive Committee Majority members have been telling comrades that we are disloyal and planning on splitting away from Socialist Alternative.

Outrageously this has not been raised directly with us or openly in meetings by EC Majority members. Rejecting the methods of hearsay, we confirmed directly with EC Majority member Ty M. that what we heard is accurate.

Let us be crystal clear: These allegations about us are utterly false and scandalous. We are 100% dedicated to Socialist Alternative and the CWI, organizations that we have spent our entire adult lives building over decades.

As committed members, we are duty bound to openly raise within the organization our views, and criticisms, when we believe there are important issues at stake. Our organization – setting for itself the greatest task in human history – has little need for members who do not think independently and critically. To equate raising criticisms with being disloyal is an utterly pernicious method. It is the method of leaders who are unable to meet arguments on the political plane but instead need to create an atmosphere of suspicion which hinders a calm political discussion of the merits of the various issues.

It has now been one year since we have been “locked out” from meaningful participation in EC discussions and decisions. (“Lock-out” was the word used by SA National Organizer Bryan Koulouris in his sum-up at the CWI International Executive Committee meeting in December 2017.)

Major decisions – such as the political and organizational direction of the most important areas of work, the political approach in important material, hiring full-timers, allocation of resources,

and significant financial expenditures – are either decided completely outside the elected EC or are formally “approved” by the EC in a purely symbolic fashion.

If comrades have any doubt if this is really the case, please do not hesitate to ask us and we will be glad to elaborate in a separate letter the extensive evidence for this.

Excluding elected EC members with a minority viewpoint from participation on the EC is completely contrary to the democratic traditions of genuine Marxism. This includes the democratic centralist conception of the right of minority trends to be represented on leadership bodies, a basic standard in the Trotskyist movement.

Unfortunately this is not currently the norm in SA.

An even more basic level of democracy is the elementary idea that all EC members elected by National Committee have the full rights and obligations of being members of the EC. All EC members elected by the NC have the right to participate in EC discussions, argue for their views, and attempt to convince other EC members of their positions. A majority on an EC does not have the right to systematically exclude EC members with a minority viewpoint from the EC for over a year. Such a course of action means in reality changing the composition of the EC in an unpolitical and undemocratic fashion.

The EC Majority Group has attempted to defend this blatantly undemocratic procedure in two contradictory ways (leaving aside the one time Bryan K stated the real situation in his sum-up at the December 2017 IEC meeting). At times they assert there is no lockout – yet fail to provide any substantial answer to the evidence we have provided. At other times they have implicitly

acknowledged there is, in fact, a lockout by claiming that we have acted in such an unconstructive fashion that it was not viable to include us in discussions on important matters. If this was the case, there is a democratic mechanism to deal with it. They have every right (and obligation) to openly make the case to the NC for removing us from the EC, to decide the question democratically through a vote of the NC. The EC Majority Group has failed to pursue this course.

The NC was only informed about this situation when we reported it at the December 2017 and March 2018 NC meetings. Unfortunately, this was not addressed.

At each stage of this debate we explained that we believed there were two main political issues which were the underlying basis for the tensions within the SA leadership:

1) To be able to effectively address a mass audience requires breaking out of an abstract propagandistic approach of repeating old formulas. This needs to be done in a principled manner rather than an opportunist fashion of bending to the low level of consciousness of the broad audience we are speaking to. The rise of mass left-wing developments such as our city council work in Seattle, the Bernie campaign, the Trump resistance, and the rise of DSA have provided new opportunities to engage in mass work in some instances which has posed these questions more sharply. However, the underlying differences of approach on the EC are not new. Over the past 20 years there has been an ongoing debate within SA between two wings in our leadership. One wing has pushed for an active, revolutionary intervention in broader developments to fight for influence, deploying flexible tactics combined with a principled approach. Another wing has tended in the direction of a conservative and propagandistic approach.

2) With the election of a city councilmember, the organization has to deal in a concrete fashion with how to defend the democratic centralist understanding that a revolutionary organization

oversees the work of its public representatives, rather than allowing public representatives to act independently and, given their weight, direct important aspects of our party's work.

We have argued that, while these political questions are important and should not be brushed aside in a pragmatic fashion, they are entirely normal and healthy issues that have naturally arisen due to the big steps forward SA has made since 2012 and the rapidly changing objective situation. By openly discussing them in a calm, patient, and political manner, the whole organization would have nothing to lose and everything to gain from a mutually educational and comradely discussion and debate.

A self-confident and responsible leadership would embrace an open discussion and debate, include those advocating minority views in discussions, take into account their proposals and concerns, make every effort to demonstrate that the democratic rights of a minority would be fully protected, and work to overcome any unnecessary divisions on a principled basis. This was how we approached the Sanders debate within our organization only one year before, when the majority went out of its way to pay to fly NC members all across the country to make their case to the full membership about their views, publishing numerous members bulletins, and regularly discussing with minority NC members to reach common agreement about how to organize these debates.

Unfortunately, the EC Majority Group has refused to adopt such an approach. Instead, they have responded to political and organizational disagreements by resorting to unprecedented administrative measures and violations of basic democratic rights. Unable to answer our arguments politically, they have instead attempted to discredit us based on making a series of unsubstantiated or highly exaggerated personal and organizational allegations. In addition, one city council full-timer was fired and a second city council full-timer was driven out because these two comrades raised legitimate criticisms of our leadership.

We are absolutely willing to serve the organization in positions we are elected to as long as basic democratic norms are maintained. But we are not willing to be complicit in this farce any more. We cannot in good faith continue to pretend to SA members that we are actually members of the EC. We are in no position to answer to them for the decisions of the EC on political, organizational or financial matters when we have no meaningful knowledge or input into those decisions. SA members deserve to know who the actual EC members are who they can hold to account for the decisions of the EC.

We therefore are resigning from the EC in protest against this undemocratic charade.

This is not a decision we make lightly. Philip has been a member of the EC since 1998. Stephan has been participating on the US EC since the fall of 2013, and before that he was a member of the CWI International Secretariat, and before that a member of the German EC.

We have worked for over a year to overcome this situation and take the time to resolve it. Unfortunately, over this period the undemocratic actions of the EC Majority Group have taken on greater, not less, momentum. We have reached out to the EC Majority Group on several occasions with proposals for how to de-escalate this crisis and find a road back to joint work on a democratic and principled basis, yet these overtures were rejected.

There is no willingness by the EC Majority Group to cooperate in any meaningful way with us. Stephan has not been included in the Editorial Board work in a serious fashion. Therefore, Stephan is also resigning from his position as a full-timer after 14 years of working as a CWI full-timer.

Philip has also stepped down as a full-timer, a position he was elected to in 2001 when he was the only full-timer in SA. In our view, the resolution adopted by a majority of the March NC meeting posed to Philip that he either be a full-timer or give up his rights to raise his political views. (It urges Philip to “take full leave from political work and move to another city” and “no longer be involved in

the day to day work of the Seattle organization” despite being an elected Seattle EC and City Committee member.) While the EC and NC were discussing this resolution, Philip told both bodies that, in his view, this resolution was an administrative attempt to silence his voice from the political debate opening up in the Seattle organization in the run-up to its 2018 City Convention. Given this choice, Philip opted to exercise his rights as a member to democratically participate in internal discussions in SA and informed the EC that he was resigning from full-time work.

This does not alter our commitment to building SA and the CWI at all. We will continue to participate in the activities of the organization. We will work loyally and diligently to build the organization under the direction of its elected leadership.

In line with our duty as revolutionaries and members of this organization, we also have an obligation to openly advocate for our views and fight to correct mistakes that we believe the organization is making. For a Marxist, this duty is far more important than any position. We will raise our views in a responsible and constructive manner, always striving to take into account the overall needs of the organization and the revolutionary movement.

We are committed to the cause of the self-emancipation of the working class and therefore the building of a Marxist international, that is, developing the CWI on a global scale and Socialist Alternative in the US. To do so, we believe there needs to be a fundamental break with bureaucratic measures and an open debate about principled mass work and a healthy relationship between our party and the work of elected officials. We will continue to speak out for our views as a loyal minority in this organization and actively work to build SA and the forces of Marxism internationally.

In Solidarity,  
Philip Locker and Stephan Kimmerle