

To: John Gollan - for the attention of the Executive Committee

The North-East Lewisham Branch of the Communist Party, hearing the report-back of its delegate to National Congress, expresses its concern at the steps taken to prevent our branch's resolution (No.56) from being moved in Congress, either on its own or composited with the other similar resolutions in accordance with traditional procedure in the British working class movement.

Having spent considerable time discussing and formulating our resolution and raising our delegate's fees, we feel slighted by the dismissive attitude of the spokesmen of the Resolutions Committee. From the outset this committee tried to get our delegate to withdraw our resolution in favour of a compromise formulation designed to satisfy delegates with opposite points of view. The Resolutions Committee pre-empted the prerogative of Congress to hear the arguments and to democratically decide its attitude.

In fact our delegate got the impression that there was no possibility of any arguments that he put on behalf of his branch members having any effect since the comrades seemed to see their job as getting delegates to accept recommendations worked out in advance rather than leaving themselves open to sympathetic consideration of their arguments. Whilst, of course, Congress Standing Orders do not allow mandating, the impression was even created that E.C. members on the Resolutions Committee might in practice have been acting as though this were not the case in order to secure the adoption of recommendations coming from the retiring E.C. We request an assurance that the E.C. would repudiate any such practice, which would be at variance with Rule 7(a) which defines the National Congress, rather than the E.C., as "the supreme authority of the Party".

Under the standing orders all amendments and branch resolutions have to be in 6 weeks before Congress. By preparing a "balanced view" which takes all views into account and then obtaining a withdrawal of all the various resolutions or amendments, controversy and debate do not take place at Congress. After the closing date for branches only emergency resolutions can come forward.

It appears to this branch that there is a considerable danger that E.C. members on the Resolutions Committee will unduly influence policy if it is permissible for the Committee to write and re-write amendments to branch congress resolutions. The danger of the self-perpetuation of policy by a retiring E.C. is quite evident.

We are also disturbed at the refusal of the Resolutions Committee at the closed session to reveal the subject matter of the resolutions which were not considered suitable for publication. In view of the fact that the closed session was denied the information are we to assume that the integrity of Congress was under suspicion?

We are particularly appalled at Comrade Chater's statement at the final session of Congress that, since our delegate had not accepted his committee's recommendation to withdraw our branch's resolution, it would have to fall. In fact our delegate was even denied the possibility of securing a compromise whereby the specific proposal contained in the third paragraph of the resolution (for the E.C. to set up a permanent sub-committee of the International Committee concerned with the Socialist countries) could have been referred to the E.C.

(P.T.O.)