



Oxford University Labour Club General Meeting Michaelmas 2018

31st October 2018, Mansfield College Oxford

AGENDA

1. Welcome and apologies
2. Reports from exec
3. Motion 1: Antisemitism on the left
4. Motion 2: To protest Alice Weidel at the Oxford Union
5. LGBTQ+ Caucus
6. Motion 3: To celebrate the history of Oxford University Labour Club
7. Caucus
8. Motion 4: Stop Brexit – Defend migrants’ rights – For a workers’ united Europe
9. Motion 5: OULC condemns Prof. Michael Biggs’ transphobic views
10. Caucus
11. Motion 6: To support and campaign for the full decriminalisation of sex work

MINUTES

Francesca Best welcomed everyone to the meeting
Apologies from Charlotte Austin

Co-chair

- FB gave her thanks to those involved in the welcome drinks
- New campaigns officer elected

Women**s Officer

- Had women**s caucus
- Put their support behind motion 6
- Pizza night tomorrow – if you need to can claim money back for this

Treasurer

- See appendix

Procedural motion was raised to move motion 3 to be debated first, motion 3 second, and motion 1 third.

Motion passed.

Motion 1: Antisemitism on the left

OULC notes:

1. Antisemitism has existed on the left historically in the form of conspiracy theories attacking “Jewish bankers”, which conflate Jews with finance and capital. This was rightly denounced in the 1890s as “the socialism of fools”.
2. In more recent years, antisemitism has also manifested on the left through a conspiracist conception of Jewish nationalism, Zionism, which inflates its real power and ascribes a uniquely reactionary character to Israel and any expression of Israeli-Jewish national self-determination.

OULC believes:

1. Antisemitism is an ideological poison which, by seeking to explain the world in conspiratorial terms and pose as a politics of resistance to the powers-that-be, is particularly and specifically toxic for the left.

OULC resolves:

1. To hold an educational discussion on the history of antisemitism on the left based on the spirit of this motion.
2. To ensure our opposition to Israel’s oppression of the Palestinians is consistent with our opposition to other instances of colonialism and national oppression, and does not involve an inconsistent denial of the Israeli-Jews’ right to self-determination or the ascribing of a disproportionate or conspiratorial power to Zionism.
3. To circulate this motion to Club members and via our website, social media etc.

Proposed: Rida Vaquas (St Hilda's)

Seconded: Simon Neumaier (Hertford)

RV spoke in favour of the motion

Motion opened to debate

Amendment proposed by Atticus Stonstrom

OULC Resolves: “2. To ensure our opposition to Israel’s oppression of the Palestinians is consistent with our opposition to other instances of colonialism and national oppression, and does not involve an inconsistent denial of the Israeli-Jews’ right to self-determination or the ascribing of a disproportionate or conspiratorial power to Zionism.”

Accepted as friendly

Concern expressed about educational sessions being run using material from Jewish Voice for Labour

RV assured the meeting that it wouldn’t and that JVL doesn’t run these sorts of sessions

Amendment proposed by Owen Winter

OULC resolves: “1. To hold an educational discussion on the history of antisemitism on the left based on the spirit of this motion and for invitations to be decided at a later date.”

It was decided that the motion includes this anyway and so the amendment was withdrawn.

Amendment proposed by Adam Hill

Remove OULC Believes: "2. The issue of antisemitism has been cynically exploited for factional ends by the right, both within the party and more widely. Such exploitation damages sincere attempts to confront and uproot antisemitism. It does not, however, mean there is no issue to be dealt with, or that all allegations of antisemitism can be dismissed as "smears" fabricated to undermine Jeremy Corbyn."

Sulamaan Rahim and Kier Mathers spoke in favour of this amendment.

Moved to vote

Amendment passed.

Amendment proposed by SN

Add OULC believes: "2. We must work to ensure that criticisms of antisemitism are deconstructive in approach and intersectional in scope. The labour movement must defy critiques that trivialize antisemitism to turn it against intersectional goals of liberation"

Not accepted as friendly

AS, Harry Stratton and SR spoke in favour of the amendment

LS and Lizzy Diggins spoke against the amendment

Moved to a vote

Amendment not accepted

Moved to vote

Motion passed unanimously

Motion 2: To protest Alice Weidel at the Oxford Union

OULC notes:

1. On 7th November, the Oxford Union will be hosting a talk by Alice Weidel, parliamentary leader of the Alternative für Deutschland party.
2. The AfD is a party of far-right German nationalism whose leaders have consistently called for the rehabilitation of the history of Nazism in the German national consciousness. Its platform is anti-immigration, and anti-women's and LGBTQ people's rights. It has aligned itself with the Islamophobic Pegida movement and other far-right groups, and has recently set up a website that calls for students to report their teachers to a so-called 'denunciation list' if they make comments criticising the AfD.
3. A protest against Ms Weidel's talk has been organised by Oxford Stand Up to Racism, a branch of the national Stand Up to Racism organisation that serves as a front for the Socialist Workers' Party.
4. In 2013, allegations of rape and sexual abuse against a senior figure in the SWP (known as 'Comrade Delta') emerged. The SWP leadership organised a cover-up of these allegations, setting up a 'kangaroo court' that asked alleged victims about their sexual history and drinking habits, and forcing through their report at a special conference that resulted in the resignation of over 500 members. There has been no further investigation of the matter since, and no regret on the part of SWP leaders in the handling of this case has been publicly expressed.

OULC believes:

1. Authoritarian nationalism is a threat to the security of minority groups within Germany, and to our values of democracy, equality and solidarity. OULC must oppose these ideologies being given a platform within our university community.
2. The SWP, in its whitewashing of the Comrade Delta allegations, has shown contempt for survivors of sexual assault and for its own democratic processes. OULC must stand in solidarity with survivors, by refusing to collude with an organisation that was described by one of the alleged victims of the Comrade Delta case as a 'dangerous environment' for women.
3. There is a large number of attacks and violence which is actively encouraged by Alice Weidel and that she has taken part in citizen patrols which intend to create an atmosphere of fear and intimidation on German cities.
4. In particular, the OULC condemns the AfD for the involvement of current and self-proclaimed former Neo-Nazis and their endorsement of anti-Semitic ideology. The OULC further condemns the Conservative government for legitimising far right anti-Semitic movements in Germany and Hungary

OULC resolves:

1. To officially condemn the Oxford Union's invitation of Ms Weidel.
2. To mandate the campaigns officer to organise an official, autonomous OULC protest against the talk at the Oxford Union on Wednesday 7th November.
3. To bring OULC's iconic banner to this protest.

Proposed: Iris Kaye-Smith (Pembroke)

Seconded: Lottie Sellers (Mansfield)

IKS spoke in favour of the motion

Motion opened to debate

RV asked "how far does "refused to collude with" go?"

IKS replied that there is nothing mandating OULC members not to collude, just that an opportunity should be provided for people who don't work with the SWP to protest

Amendment proposed by SN

Add OULC believes: "3. There is a large number of attacks and violence which is actively encouraged by Alice Weidel and that she has taken part in citizen patrols which intend to create an atmosphere of fear and intimidation on German cities"

Amendment accepted as friendly

It was asked if we should hold the protest with the SU LGBT campaign

IKS said that it was important to ensure we hold our own autonomous protest

Amendment proposed by HS

Add OULC believes: "4. In particular, the OULC condemns the AfD for the involvement of current and self-proclaimed former Neo-Nazis and their endorsement of anti-Semitic ideology. The OULC further condemns the Conservative government for legitimising far right anti-Semitic movements in Germany and Hungary"

Accepted as friendly

Concern was expressed that the discussion on SWP may detract from the point of the motion
IKS argued that this didn't detract

Moved to vote

Motion passed unanimously

LGBTQ+ caucus meets

Recommended to vote in favour of motion 5

Motion 3: To celebrate the history of Oxford University Labour Club

OULC notes:

1. 99 years ago today (31st October) Oxford University Labour Club held its first ever general meeting in the Three Feathers Tavern in St Aldates with a turnout of 60 members
2. This makes OULC the oldest student Labour Club in the country
3. The club's alumni, and therefore the experiences of the club, have gone on to shape the history of our party and the United Kingdom

OULC believes:

1. Such an occasion should be celebrated
2. The importance of history to our movement is such that, in the words of Nye Bevan, "when we realise that all the tides of history are flowing in our direction, when we realise we are not beaten- that we represent the future- then when we say it and we mean it, we will lead our people to where they ought to be led"

OULC resolves:

1. To, via this motion, acknowledge and celebrate the history of this club, good or bad on the anniversary of its foundation
2. To undertake to research and write the history of this club in preparation for its centenary next year

Proposed: Joseph Hettrick (Wadham)

Seconded: Owen Winter (Jesus)

JH spoke in favour of the motion

Noted that today is OULC's 99th birthday.

Motion opened to debate

AP raised that there should be an acknowledgement that Oxford University plays a large role in promoting the ruling class

Amendment proposed by Jay Staker

Amend OULC resolves: "1. To, via this motion, acknowledge and celebrate the history of this club, good or bad on the anniversary of its foundation"

Accepted as friendly

Moved to vote

Motion passes unanimously

Motion 4: Stop Brexit – Defend migrants’ rights – For a workers’ united Europe

OULC Notes:

1. Research commissioned by Queen Mary University London shows that 78% of Labour members are in favour of Brexit being stopped or a referendum on the final deal.
2. That Labour policy on Brexit remains unclear, including on the issue of free movement between the EU and the UK.

OULC Believes:

1. Brexit will be a disaster for working class people. Only a strong Labour Party that seeks to shift power from the rich to the working class can fight to stop it.
2. We must advocate a people’s vote, not because we are fanatics for referendums, but because we need to try to impose control over and stop the process by which extreme Tory nationalists and free-marketeers are driving British society off a cliff.
3. The vote must, to be meaningful, include an option to remain.
4. Meanwhile, we must defend every right under attack from the Tories’ Brexit – whether migrant rights, workers’ rights, environmental protections or freedom of movement between the UK and Europe. We must commit to reversing any attacks on these rights the Tories implement.
5. If we are serious about ending the hostile environment for migrants we must extend, not limit free movement. We must end detention, deportations and denial of access to services. Stagnant wages, crumbling services and the housing crisis are caused by the government and employers making the rich richer at the working class’s expense, and not immigration. The answer is united workers’ struggles, regardless of origin; migrant workers are often in the forefront of such struggles.
6. We strongly oppose the EU as it is: we must remain and rebel! We want to battle for an end to Fortress Europe, for an extension of freedom of movement beyond the shores of the Mediterranean and to all refugees, for the levelling up of wages, conditions, services and rights across Europe and beyond, and for democratisation of European and international institutions.

7. However, we recognize that the Brexit on the table today is entirely a project of the far right, and is in not conducive to these goals.

OULC Resolves:

1. To campaign for Labour to come out clearly in favour of a people's vote with an option to remain.
2. To call for Labour to campaign for remain in such a vote, taking the lead in uniting European labour movements to fight for a workers' united Europe.
3. To campaign for Labour to commit closing all detention centres, ending deportation and no recourse to public funds for migrants.
4. To mobilise for and take the OULC banner to the protest on the 1st December at the Yarlswood Detention Centre

Proposed: Atticus Stonestrom (St Hilda's)

Seconded: Andrew Peak (St Hilda's)

AS spoke in favour of the motion

SR spoke in opposition to the motion

Motion opened to debate

SR asked how a second vote would help minority groups

AP responded

Amendment proposed by Hugo Raine

Remove OULC resolves: 1. and 2.

Amendment not taken as friendly

It was raised that a second vote would be incredibly divisive and could damage migrants' rights

AS responded

OW argued that the amendment so fundamentally changes the motion that shouldn't be passed, as it was just an argument on the motion

JS suggested that the amendment should be withdrawn and that a different motion about workers rights should be put forwards in order for the motion to make sense

Amendment withdrawn

Amendment proposed by AP

Add OULC resolves: "4. To mobilise for and take the OULC banner to the protest on the 1st December at the Yarlswood Detention Centre"

Amendment taken as friendly

Question was asked on whether this motion uses detention centres to make people appear bad for voting against the people's vote

Request for a secret ballot

Moved to vote
Motion failed – 8-10

Disabilities caucus meets

Nothing to report

Motion 5: OULC condemns Prof. Michael Biggs' transphobic views

Note: the following includes references to and instances of transphobia.

OULC notes:

1. The Oxford Student revealed on 26 October 2018 that Professor of Sociology and Fellow of St Cross College Michael Biggs has been posting transphobic statements online under the Twitter handle @MrHenryWimbush, which is connected to his University email account.
2. Tweets include “transphobia is a word created by fascists, and used by cowards, to manipulate morons” and a retweet about “challenging the trans myth” (28 June).
3. There are allegations by students that he has brought up these transphobic views during lessons on unrelated subjects.
4. His views have become known to students as well as the University which as received several complaints over a period of time. Oxford’s LGBTQ+ Society and Dr. Clara Barker, a trans woman and vice-chair of the University’s LGBTQ+ Advisory Board passed on complaints to the University back in June. There is currently a letter being signed by graduate students to the Head of the Department of Sociology condemning Biggs’ views.
5. Nearly half of trans people under 26 have attempted to commit suicide (according to Stonewall) and that for many LGBTQ+ individuals, university provides an essential escape from the discrimination they face at home.

OULC believes:

1. That students of the University should be able to live and learn safely and free from abuse or intimidation.
2. That staff with outwardly transphobic beliefs in their teaching undermine the University’s ethos and reputation and inhibits students from learning and feeling safe
3. That OULC must show solidarity with the local trans community.

OULC resolves:

1. To mandate the Co-Chairs and/or the LGBTQ+ Officer to write to Vice-Chancellor Louise Richardson, Master of St Cross College Carole Souter, Head of the Department of Sociology Professor Christiaan Monden, and any other relevant persons,
 - a) condemning Mr. Biggs’ transphobic views
 - b) expressing our concerns about the impact of Mr. Biggs’ views on student welfare, learning, as well as the University’s reputation
 - c) calling for an investigation into his actions, including a review of his future employment at the University.

Proposed by: Jay Staker (Queens)
Seconded by: Alex Rostron (Wadham)

JS spoke in favour of the motion

Motion opened to debate

Amendment proposed by AP

Amend OULC believes “2. That staff with outwardly transphobic beliefs in their teaching undermine the University’s ethos and reputation and inhibits students from learning and feeling safe”

Amendment taken as friendly

Amendment proposed by AP

Amend OULC resolves: “1. To mandate the Co-Chairs and/or the LGBTQ+ Officer to write a statement”

Remove OULC resolves: 1.c)

Not taken as friendly

Amendment failed to pass

AP spoke in opposition to the motion

He argued that it gave university management a place to police reviews of its employees

Moved to vote

Motion passes

BAME caucus meets

Nothing to report

Motion 6: To support and campaign for the full decriminalisation of sex work

OULC notes:

1. Sex work takes place via phone, webcam, stripping, pole-dancing, modelling and porn and from escort agencies, flats, streets, parks, saunas, massage parlours, peep shows, BDSM venues, private parties and home.
2. Selling sex itself is not illegal, but many laws criminalise associated activities that leave sex workers vulnerable and deprived of basic rights.
3. When sex workers receive criminal records for offences relating to their work, it makes it even harder for them to find other employment, keeping them in the industry.
4. Sex workers are increasingly organising alongside other workers within the trade union movement.
5. A number of international human rights organisations support the full decriminalization of sex work including Amnesty International, Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women; Human

Rights Watch; UNAIDS; the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health; Transgender Europe; ILGA-Europe and the World Health Organization.

OULC believes:

1. Sex work is work. While it is gendered, stigmatised and often precarious work, it is work that pays the rent, bills, and puts food on the table for thousands of families across the UK.
2. Criminalisation makes sex work dangerous. Current laws means that sex workers are unable to legally work together to increase safety, and are discouraged from reporting crimes committed against them for fear of being arrested themselves.
3. People have the right to work in the sex industry without threat of criminal sanctions or police harassment.
4. Instead of attempting to eradicate the sex industry through further empowering the police and immigration enforcement, we need other workers to support sex workers in their demands for safety, labour rights and dignity at work.
5. Decriminalisation means sex workers can report suspected cases of trafficking to police without self-incrimination. Anti-trafficking and anti-slavery law must not obliterate the right of adult individuals to gain livelihoods selling sex.

OULC resolves:

1. To support and campaign for the full decriminalisation of sex work.
2. To support the unionisation of sex workers and to respect their demands for labour rights and to improve their working conditions, including occupational safety and health.
3. To campaign against any attempt to introduce the criminalisation of clients, often referred to as the Nordic Model, or any law criminalising the advertisement of sexual services (similar to FOSTA/SESTA) in the UK.
4. To campaign for this policy within Labour Students.

Proposed: Andrew Peak (St Hilda's)

Seconded: Lottie Sellers (Mansfield)

AP spoke in favour of the motion

Motion opened to debate

Moved to vote

Motion passes unanimously

Appendix

OULC Finances – MT 2018 on 31/10/18

