

The Split in Respect

Tuesday 6 November 2007, by [CALLINICOS Alex](#) (Date first published: 5 November 2007).

Dear comrades,

You may have been following, with some bemusement the crisis, that has developed, suddenly and brutally, within Respect, and that has now led to George Galloway and his allies to break away and launch their own 'Respect Renewal Conference'. This is a tragic development and we in the Socialist Workers Party feel we owe the international left some explanation.

The attached document offers is an attempt to provide such an explanation. It was endorsed overwhelmingly by a Party Council (national delegate meeting of the SWP) that took place yesterday. But events have moved on since the document was originally drafted. In particular, a series of attempts were made in the past week by the Galloway faction to declare that the SWP had left Respect and, when this failed, to prevent the National Conference of Respect (scheduled for 17-18 November) from taking place. It was only after the latter ploy was rejected by Respect branch meetings around the country that the Galloway faction used to cover of darkness physically to seize the Respect National Office and to call its own conference. The simple reason why these outrageous tactics were used is that the Galloway faction believes that it will be a minority at the properly constituted Respect conference.

Factional struggles are often complicated and confusing processes but we insist that the division in Respect is a political one between left and right. Since the end of August Galloway has been seeking to force the SWP, the most powerful organized force on the radical left in Britain, into a subordinate position within Respect. This reflected our resistance to his attempt to transform Respect from a pluralistic and democratic coalition into a top-down alliance of notables focused exclusively on winning Muslim votes. It is true that Galloway has won the support of a handful of SWP members and of some well-known figures on the left, such as the film director Ken Loach, but this does not alter the dynamic of the struggle that has developed in recent months. The reasons why these comrades have sided with Galloway is diverse, but they are badly mistaken politically. The dominant forces in the breakaway will be Galloway, Salma Yaqoob, and the Muslim notables connected to them.

There is no doubt that the crisis in Respect is a major reverse for the process of left realignment in Britain. Nevertheless, the SWP remains strongly committed to this process, both in Britain and on an international scale. We look forward to working with you in future.

In comradeship,

Alex Callinicos