

Great Britain: Coalition of Resistance conference

Wednesday 1 December 2010, by [MAC UAID Liam](#) (Date first published: 27 November 2010).

“Exhilarating” is not an adjective that is often used on this site, especially when describing an event which involved being obliged to listen to twenty platform speakers. Most of them agreed with each other on the big picture stuff too.

Yet in its own way the Coalition of Resistance (COR) conference was exhilarating. One thousand three hundred people registered for it. The odd thing was that no one involved in organising the event or running it had any idea who most of them were. I was in two workshops and was surrounded by unfamiliar faces. By way of context there were more people I knew by sight at the last couple of central London demonstrations I’ve been at, both of which pulled about five thousand. Here is an utterly arbitrary, probably occasionally inaccurate, selection of impressions.

Conference was due to start at 10.30. It did. That is unprecedented but the hall was full by that point. A student who’d been kettled earlier in the week kicked proceedings off. Quite right too. She was followed by Clare Solomon who said she found addressing the event more nerve-wracking than Newsnight. Who knows how much you can read into these things but she revealed that an ex-cop had sent her a letter with a tenner inside in which he said that the student demos had restored his faith in young people.

For COR Paul Mackney said that it is in transition from being a pressure group to becoming a mass movement. Its success will be measured not by programmatic elegance but by the breadth of the movement.

In a day that had its quota of demagoguery Rachel Newton, who spoke on behalf of the People’s Charter offered one of the most intellectually interesting contribution. The gist of it was that there is a strong similarity to the fragmented, disorganised working class which existed in the 1830s and 1840s and the same class today. Discuss.

Newly elected Unite general secretary Len McCluskey did not mention industrial action (if my notes are accurate) but he did say that he would be instructing his action committees to contact and work with local anti-cuts groups.

Both John McDonnell and Bob Crow came out strongly in favour of direct action with Bob suggesting that broken windows make work for glaziers, an incontrovertible fact as events at Tory HQ show.

Krushchev’s speech about how dreadful Stalin was came to mind when Chris Bambery of the Right To Work Campaign (RTWC) talked about how some people in the hall come from a tradition where organisations rush to call themselves a leadership. He rightly pointed out that those holding such pretensions need to be punished by the mass movement and invited those present to get involved in the RTWC’s upcoming conference and demonstration.

You could make a case that there was a democratic deficit in the day. You’d probably be a bit wrong.

One hundred and twenty people had their names put forward for membership of a national

committee which will elect an executive at its first meeting. All were accepted and it was made plain that there would be a deliberate mixture of politics, areas and local campaign groups. Twenty two amendments were made to the resolutions which were up for discussion and I had honed my arguments against those calling for a general strike. This was time wasted as they were all remitted to the national committee. In the circumstances that was sensible and there will be a resolution based policy making conference before July

Messy in parts, occasionally repetitive and tendentious, big and diffuse. It felt like the start of something important.

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P.S.

* Posted on November 27, 2010:

<http://liammacuaid.wordpress.com/2010/11/27/coalition-of-resistance-conference/>