

NOTE: After the letter below was written, but before it was sent, the undersigned comrades of HWRS received a document dated June 16, written by CR and DC, entitled “How the HWRS inside/outside faction loses [*sic*] its way.” CR and DC’s June 16 document has been posted on the HWRS Facebook page and sent to various individuals and organizations on the left with which HWRS has been corresponding. Accordingly, we are distributing the document below in the same manner. We will prepare and distribute a substantive response to CR and DC’s June 16 document in due course.

To Comrades CR and DC:

As you surmised, there were two separate HWRS meetings on Friday evening June 15. At the meeting attended by the undersigned, we decided to send you the email you are now reading. Before doing so, we read and discussed CR’s June 15 email in the form of a letter to SH, which we received just prior to the start of our meeting.

Over the last several weeks, HWRS has been consumed with an internal crisis that is making it impossible for the organization to function effectively. We believe it is imperative that the current situation in HWRS be resolved, so that the organization can get on with its work in the class struggle.

During the crisis period, the two members of the EC (CR and DC) have been conducting themselves in a manner that not only is inimical to HWRS’s basic principle of combating alienation and promoting comradely, humanistic interpersonal relationships, but also violates the basic norms of workers’ democracy and Leninist tradition. To start with, a two-person EC is an anomaly not recognized by Bolshevik tradition. Out of practical necessity, we have been functioning without a full complement of EC members since DW went on disability leave. Under these circumstances, and particularly during a pre-Congress discussion period, Leninist tradition and the values of workers’ democracy require the EC to operate with the utmost respect for internal democracy and transparency, and to take great care to refrain from making substantive political decisions without a full organizational discussion.

Instead, this EC adopted a public document on critical support for Syriza in the Greek elections that was flatly inconsistent with HWRS’s democratically adopted methodology regarding critical electoral support, without revealing to the membership that it was even considering deviating from HWRS’s position on this subject. If anything, the EC affirmatively misled the membership, by releasing drafts of the document that were consistent with HWRS’s method, and then publishing a significantly altered version without giving the membership any prior notice. Even the liaison committee partner who supported the EC’s change of line has acknowledged that the EC acted improperly in adopting the final version of the document without first discussing it with the other members and supporters of HWRS, including comrade DW.

Since releasing the document on Syriza, this EC has consistently refused to engage in a substantive political discussion regarding the document, or even to acknowledge that it

acted improperly. Instead, in order to avoid being forced to defend its position internally, the EC has abrogated to itself powers that the organization never conferred on it, and then abused its self-conferred authority in an openly anti-democratic and draconian manner.

HWRS has no written criteria or procedures for membership, or for initiating or concluding leaves of absence or voluntary temporary relegations to sympathizer status. Informally, HWRS has historically recognized the right of members to return from authorized leaves of absence when they so choose, and to participate in the internal life of the organization during their leave to the extent possible. Now, the EC has unilaterally decided that members on leave can be barred from participating in political discussion, and that the EC has the authority to bar them from returning to active status. Worse, the EC has insisted that it has the authority to bar members, on pain of expulsion, from participating in a political discussion with a founding member who has announced his readiness to return from a disability leave.

The EC has also insisted that all political discussion between any member of HWRS and DW must come to a halt due to DW's exercise of his democratic right to request an investigation and hearing regarding the question whether the EC's statements about him constituted slander. This position of the EC is unprincipled, unprecedented, and blatantly anti-democratic. Its characterization of DW as an "outsider" and non-member is ludicrous, given that DW was a founding member both of this organization and of its predecessor; has been its principal theoretician during its entire existence; and has devoted considerable time and energy to its work throughout his disability leave.

After discussion with the other members and supporters of HWRS, in the interest of attempting to keep the organization intact, DW acceded to the EC's precondition for permitting him to participate in political discussion with HWRS members. On June 12, he wrote to the EC that "for the sake of removing any organizational matters as barriers to the current discussions, I withdraw my assertion that the EC slandered me." Yet even after receiving this offer, the EC persisted in its position, insisting that DW's offer was inadequate, and accusing DW (falsely) of violating "factional discipline" by wording it as he did. All of the undersigned agree with DW's observation that "A revolutionary group in which the leaders refuse to hold political discussions with anyone who brings moral charges against them will inevitably degenerate and become undemocratic." To this, comrades CR and DC apparently have no answer.

Significant differences between the members of the EC and the rest of HWRS have emerged during the pre-Congress period. These include not only the difference regarding critical electoral support, but also such matters as union work, contact work, organizational priorities, and the method for building a revolutionary party. It is obvious to all of us that the EC is hiding behind the organizational maneuvers described above in an transparent (but futile) attempt to construct a justification for its persistent refusal to engage in a substantive political discussion of these issues with the membership.

As a consequence of the EC's behavior as outlined above, we took the following actions at our meeting on Friday June 15. First, we recognized the right of comrade EB to revoke

his voluntary relegation to sympathizer status, and of comrade DW to return from his disability leave. Accordingly, we voted to recognize both EB and DW as full members. We also accepted comrade DG's request to be officially recognized as a sympathizer. Second, acting as a two-thirds majority of HWRS (4 out of 6 full members), we resolved that in light of the recent actions of the members of the EC, as outlined above, we no longer recognize these individuals as members of HWRS, and will not so recognize them unless and until they agree to engage in a substantive political discussion with the organization, in a good faith effort to resolve the political differences. If CR and DC are willing to begin participating in substantive political discussions with the majority of HWRS, we offer them the opportunity to do so. In the meantime, we do not recognize any authority of CR and DC to function as HWRS's EC, or to take any public action in the name of the organization.

If a split results from the actions taken by the undersigned on June 15, it will be CR and DC who have created it, through their refusal to engage in a political discussion with the majority of HWRS. This is regrettable, because a factional fight without discussions on the contested questions is extremely disruptive, particularly within a very small organization. We are convinced, however, that the time has come to put an end to the EC's abuse of democratic rights, and the resulting highly disturbing disruption of our organization. We intend to complete the pre-congress political discussions, and to move forward with HWRS's work after the congress. We have important and exciting opportunities ahead of us in our joint work with LBB, as well as in other areas.

We owe it to the movement to publish an account and balance sheet of the events of the last several weeks, and we will do so in due course. We are confident that all HWRS members and supporters, as well as others on the Left, will learn important political lessons from this fight. On the other hand, we also know from long years of experience of fighting centrism, that if CR and DC decide not to accept our invitation to engage in discussion and rejoin HWRS, they will inevitably find themselves traveling the centrist road farther into the swamp. This is already clear from their opportunistic position on critical support for Syriza, as well as their capitulation in conducting a joint election campaign with workers who openly support the Democratic Party.

We are confident that HWRS will go forward, because we have the right program and method. We regret that CR and DC no longer share it.

For HWRS – CD, SH, EB, and DW

Concurred in by DG (HWRS sympathizer)