

Andrew Kliman,
Sept. 11, 2013

The Executive Committee of the Socialist Party (England and Wales) has invited me to debate the causes of the latest capitalist crisis, at events in London and the U.S., with a representative or representatives of the views of the party's leadership.

The first document below is my message accepting the invitation.

The second document below is the invitation and the correspondence that was attached to it.

MY ACCEPTANCE OF THE INVITATION

From: Drewk
Sent: Wednesday, September 11, 2013 3:19 AM
To: PM-Socialism
Subject: Re: Socialism 2012 Invite

Dear Hannah Sell,
Dear Executive Committee of the Socialist Party (England and Wales),

I gladly accept your kind invitation to debate the causes of the latest capitalist crisis, at public events in London and the U.S., with whoever you choose to represent the leadership of your party. I'm honored that you've asked me to take part in a discussion that we both agree is "clearly a very important and on-going issue for Marxists."

My main aim is the same as yours: discussions that help to clarify the issues at stake and that are "of educational benefit, particularly for workers." My contributions to the discussion will thus address not only the causes of the crisis in a narrow sense, but their political implications as well, especially their political implications for working people. For me, theory is a guide to action, so I don't consider the causes of the crisis to be a narrowly "theoretical" issue.

I would like the U.S. event to be in New York City, where I live and can help organize it. As a large city close (relatively speaking) to the UK, it is ideal. But security on the New York City campus of the university at which I teach is extremely tight; in order to attend events, members of the public need to register in advance, and so on. For this and other reasons, I think that workers and other attendees will feel more comfortable at a non-university event. I thus suggest that at least the New York event be held off-campus.

It isn't feasible for me to organize such an event without help. I have contacted Marxist-Humanist Initiative (MHI), with which I work politically. MHI is willing to help organize the event and it welcomes the participation of Socialist Alternative, your U.S. sister organization, as co-organizer. You can find out more about MHI by visiting www.marxist-humanist-initiative.org or writing to mhi@www.marxisthumanistinitiative.org.

I definitely agree with you about the importance of “open and democratic discussion.” I, too, have long endured the lack of it, so I know how you feel. For instance, I and others have repeatedly invited representatives of the *Monthly Review* school to debate their account of the latest crisis and their general underconsumptionist theory of crisis, to no avail. One reason why I’m so excited about the upcoming debate is that I expect it will be my first opportunity to debate those matters head-to-head.

A large part of my political activity involves scholarship, but “scholarly” and “academic” aren’t the same thing. I am *in* academia, but not *of* academia. I’m a Marxist-Humanist who teaches college-level economics for a living. (I would guess that your colleague Kshama Sawant would say something similar.) I have continually faced resistance to open discussion on the part of the academic “Marxist economists.” In light of that problem, I have suggested that “the field needs to greatly reduce its dependence upon the resources of academia. Intellectual autonomous zones need to be created” (“Disintegration of the Marxian School, The” available at akliman.squarespace.com/writings).

Given my country’s experience with McCarthyism, during which organizational membership was a key issue, I do not discuss that matter publicly. I trust you understand.

The misunderstanding regarding your invitation to speak at Socialism 2013 is unfortunate. When asked to attend in August of last year and to “pencil the dates in,” I immediately agreed, and I noted that “I’ll ... consult with you before any possible decision not to attend” (correspondence you copied below your Sept. 6, 2013 message, below). I thought it was clear from this that I would attend unless you heard otherwise, but I guess it wasn’t.

Whatever. I’m looking forward to the upcoming discussions. I hope and expect that they will indeed help clarify the issues at stake and be of educational benefit. Thanks once again for inviting me!

Comradely,

Andrew Kliman

INVITATION TO DEBATE

From: PM-Socialism
Sent: Friday, September 06, 2013 9:57 AM
To: Drewk
Subject: RE: Socialism 2012 Invite

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for letter offering to speak at Socialism 2013. We are keen to discuss the causes of the capitalist crisis and have done so, including at our Socialism event last year, to which you

were invited but unfortunately were unable to attend. This is clearly a very important and on-going issue for Marxists. However, we want to make it quite clear that the leadership of the Socialist Party does not agree with the explanation you give for the crisis in your most recent book, 'The failure of capitalist production: underlying causes of the great recession', and in other written material. We would welcome an opportunity to discuss these issues with you and others, both verbally and in writing. Such a discussion, if it takes place in a structured manner, could result in greater clarity and be of educational benefit, particularly for workers, which is our main aim. We are in the process of producing a written response to 'The failure of capitalist production' which we are sure will result in further discussion and debate.

As mentioned above we originally invited you to address our discussion on the economic crisis at last year's Socialism event. When you said you were unable to attend in August 2012 our Socialism organising team enquired if you would be available to speak at our event in 2013. You replied nine months later, in June of this year, to say that you would now be able to attend this year. However, by then our plans for Socialism 2013 were underway, and given the subjects and speakers we need to fit into the programme for this year's event - including Bob Crow general secretary of the transport workers' union (RMT) and Mark Serwotka general secretary of the civil servants' union (PCS), as well as rank-and-file speakers from key struggles in Britain - we felt it would not be possible to do justice to this issue. While the causes of the crisis is an important theoretical debate, our priority at Socialism 2013 will be to have forums on the crisis of political representation in Britain, the struggle for a general strike against austerity, and the situation in the Middle East.

We have never avoided debates on important issues, and will not do so on this occasion. We would like to organise a public debate in London to which you would be invited to speak. We would like an assurance that from you that you would invite us to take part in a similar public debate on these issues in the US. This 'quid pro quo' is very important to us. We have a long history of open and democratic discussion, including repeatedly inviting other left political trends to debate with us at our political events, but this is rarely reciprocated. We have done this with the Socialist Workers' Party (IST) at our Socialism event for example. However, despite repeated requests they have never been willing to allow us to debate at their Marxism event.

As you may know the Socialist Party is a growing organisation, with over two thousand members of mainly workers and young people and strong roots in the workers' movement. We are not aware if you are part of a party or organisation. If so we would be interested to know its character, size, composition and so on. However, our impression is that your activity is mostly based in the academic sphere. Could you therefore organise a debate at a US university? We would also be happy to do the same at a university in Britain, with workers also able to attend.

We look forward to hearing from you, in order that we can work out the best way to proceed with what we believe will be a very fruitful discussion.

Comradely,

Hannah Sell
For the Socialist Party Executive Committee

-----Original Message-----

From: Drewk [mailto:Andrew_Kliman@msn.com]

Sent: 18 August 2013 21:56

To: PM-Socialism

Subject: Re: Socialism 2012 Invite

Dear Iain,

Please do confirm the invitation, and let me know when I'll be speaking, the format, and the amount of time I'll have.

Best wishes,

Andrew

-----Original Message-----

From: Drewk

Sent: Thursday, June 27, 2013 9:52 PM

To: PM-Socialism

Subject: Re: Socialism 2012 Invite

Hi Iain,

Good news. I won't have Monday classes to teach in the fall, so I'll be available for the whole of Socialism 2013.

Please do let me know whether the conference can cover some or all of my travel expenses (they'd be much appreciated, but if I can afford to, I will attend in any case).

Thanks once again for inviting me.

Best wishes,

Andrew

-----Original Message-----

From: Drewk

Sent: Wednesday, August 15, 2012 10:32 AM

To: PM-Socialism

Subject: Re: Socialism 2012 Invite

Hi Iain,

Sounds good. I'll definitely pencil it in, and consult with you before any possible decision not to attend.

Best,

Andrew

Andrew Kliman

akliman.squarespace.com: "I Ain't Gonna Work on Piero's Farm No More"

-----Original Message-----

From: PM-Socialism

Sent: Tuesday, August 14, 2012 12:29 PM

To: Drewk

Subject: RE: Socialism 2012 Invite

Hi Andrew,

We'd really appreciate you travelling all this way to come and speak.

Given the depth of this crisis, if there's a new boom phase then that's twice the reason to be discussing such issues!

Could you pencil the dates in? Don't worry about having to leave early to be back for the Monday, when we start organising the agenda properly then we tend to tailor aspects of it around overseas speakers travel arrangements.

We can definitely see what we can do to assist with funding, obviously we'd have to make a decision based on the final costs. If any other possibilities come up between now and when we've firmed it up a bit more, then let us know and we can make a final firm decision with you about it.

Thanks again,

Iain Dalton

Socialism 2012 organising team

t: 020 8988 8777

e: socialism@socialistparty.org.uk

w: www.socialism2012.org.uk

-----Original Message-----

From: Drewk [mailto:Andrew_Kliman@msn.com]

Sent: 10 August 2012 17:08

To: PM-Socialism

Subject: Re: Socialism 2012 Invite

Dear Iain,

I don't have anything planned for then. But isn't this premature--don't you think capitalism will be in a new boom phase by then? -- just kidding. I might have to leave early in order to be at work on Monday.

Also, I don't know about funding. (I live in NYC.) I can get funding from school for a non-academic conference. Is there any chance you can help out? Or might this be at the same time as the Historical Materialism conference?

Best,

Andrew

Andrew Kliman

akliman.squarespace.com: "I Ain't Gonna Work on Piero's Farm No More"

-----Original Message-----

From: PM-Socialism

Sent: Wednesday, August 08, 2012 11:49 AM

To: Drewk

Subject: RE: Socialism 2012 Invite

Dear Andrew,

Thanks for your reply. Although it is a shame you can't participate this year, we have begun on provisional plans for Socialism 2013, which should be on the 2nd and 3rd November 2013, and we would like to enquire about whether you could speak at that event?

Kind regards,

Iain Dalton

Socialism 2012 organising team

t: 020 8988 8777

e: socialism@socialistparty.org.uk

w: www.socialism2012.org.uk

-----Original Message-----

From: Drewk [mailto:Andrew_Kliman@msn.com]

Sent: 07 August 2012 18:09

To: PM-Socialism; akliman@pace.edu

Subject: Re: Socialism 2012 Invite

Dear Iain,

Thanks very much for inviting me. I really wish I could do it, but I'm already committed to participate in a conference in Oslo hosted by the Norway Social Forum (NSF) at the same time.

Best wishes,

Andrew

Andrew Kliman

akliman.squarespace.com: "I Ain't Gonna Work on Piero's Farm No More"

-----Original Message-----

From: PM-Socialism

Sent: Tuesday, August 07, 2012 12:28 PM

To: akliman@pace.edu

Subject: Socialism 2012 Invite

Dear Professor Kliman,

We are inviting you to participate in the Socialism 2012 weekend in London on the 3rd and 4th of November. Over the last few years the Socialism event, hosted by the Socialist Party, has become a regular and important fixture of the left and the workers' movement. The weekend brings together a broad audience to participate in discussion and debate with speakers from a range of backgrounds and political traditions. More than one thousand people attended in 2011 and we expect more this year.

Please visit our website for more information on the weekend.

This year we are planning a number of sessions that will debate the current economic crisis. Provisional sessions include "What are the causes of the World Economic Crisis?" and "Is the Crisis Worse than the Great Depression?" We would like to invite you to take part as a headline speaker at this session. We will finalise a title nearer the time in discussion with speakers.

If you would like to contact me for more information before committing either way please do not hesitate.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Iain Dalton

Socialism 2012 organising team

t: 020 8988 8777

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