

Dear members of the board,

We are writing as the committee of ACORN Lancaster & Morecambe to inform you of our collective resignation from our positions. We do so following recent internal developments around problems with workplace culture, democracy and accountability in ACORN UK. The resignations of numerous staff, including our own city organiser, indicate that these problems have reached a crisis point. The response of management to issues raised by staff, related to both workplace conditions and organisational strategy, demonstrates an internal culture that we believe is irreconcilable with the aims of the organisation.

We are disappointed by the reaction to issues which we believe were raised by staff in good faith, and we share the concerns raised by staff, including those relating to an over-emphasis on recruitment at the expense of supporting branches to function effectively and democratically. We believe that the recent crisis has also highlighted the lack of democracy at the national level in what aspires to be a member-led union. That there has been no forum for the discussion of the background to the resignation of key members of staff, activists, and members within a period of a couple of months, signals that the existing structures are insufficient to guarantee a meaningful role for member democracy in strategic decision making. The recent formation of a sub-committee of the national strategy group has further distanced the membership from national decision making, and has clearly not been functioning effectively as intended during this crisis. We believe the organisation would benefit from more meaningful debate and discussion concerning the structure of the organisation, particularly concerning the relationship between staff and the membership, and including whether the Head Organiser role ought to be an elected position.

The need for powerful community organisations is clearly stronger than ever. ACORN has achieved an inspiring level of organisation amongst tenants and working class people across the UK. It has improved the lives of countless people through material wins and collective empowerment, including in our city. Each of us is committed to the aims pursued by ACORN and for which we joined as members: to organise in our communities for working class power. It is due to our commitment to this aim and our understanding of the scale of the fight ahead that we believe in the need for organisational models which are viable and sustainable in the long term. A culture of participatory democracy and genuine self-reflection is fundamental to this.

Our decision to resign follows a period of deliberation and consultation with the wider membership of our branch. We have informed our local membership of our resignations today. We have met so many amazing people through our involvement with ACORN, and learnt so much. We will take these lessons and connections with us and hope that ACORN will ultimately learn something from this crisis too.

In solidarity,

Anna, Joe, Becks, Sarah, Thomas and Larry