



THE PARTY UNION LINK – RESPONSE TO COLLINS Q&As

PARTY-UNION LINK

The link doesn't need mending – it needs strengthening. Labour needs to better represent the interests of trade unionists and the party's elected representatives need to be more representative of the population – more working class, fewer career politicians. The value of collective action and the role of trade unions in defending and improving living standards needs to be accepted once again.

Any changes to the relationship designed to strengthen the link with trade unionists should facilitate and stimulate greater involvement by levypayers without threatening the finances of the party. But the need for those changes should be justified and agreed.

1. What kind of relationship with the party do you think those individuals who choose to affiliate want or expect?

Trade union levy payers already vote overwhelmingly in every union whenever required for political funds established on an opt-out basis so that their collective voice will be heard in the political arena. There is nothing undemocratic about the current arrangements, where trade union representatives are accountable to their members through each union's democratic procedures.

2. What rights should they receive? Should their rights differ from CLP members and if so how?

Affiliated trade unionists should at least continue to have the rights they have at the moment, which includes the right to help choose the party's leaders, and they should have the right to choose elected representatives too. Further than that, affiliate members should also have more rights than those proposed for registered supporters who make no financial contribution.

Affiliated trade unions should also retain the right to influence policy through the collective representation of their trade unions.

3. What ideas do you have for how members of affiliated organisations might have a closer individual engagement with Labour and a real

voice inside the party, particularly at the local level?

Labour and its representatives need to understand, support, promote and advocate trade unionism in parliament, in local councils and in government. Only by seeing Labour provide a voice for trade unions, and giving greater rights to levy payers such as in the selection of candidates will they be drawn into closer engagement.

4. How do we ensure that the collective voice of trade unions is still heard in the Labour Party?

Ensuring that collective affiliation is distinct from any form of individual membership. Ensuring that union collective representation and voting rights are sustainable and kept at the current level. Reintroducing democracy into the party's policy making by ensuring we have a conference that is allowed to determine policies not just rubber stamp them

5. Once individual affiliated members have had an active choice about whether to be part of the Labour Party, do you believe that we would need to consider the consequences for other party structures including conference and the rules for electing leaders?

Individual affiliated members already have an active choice both as to whether to be affiliated members, and can choose to be individual members additionally if they wish. There is no case for any reduction in the current level of representation or voting rights which provide a collective voice for the trade unions who founded the party –levy payers number fifteen times the individual membership of the party.

6. What views do you have about the practical timeframe for agreeing and implementing changes to affiliation and related issues?

There is no need for any change so there is no hurry to make any changes that are made.

7. Do you have any other ideas you wish to contribute to this review about how to deepen the relationship between Labour and working people?

Labour policies and values as expressed by our public representatives, need to reflect a renewed



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commitment to working class representation if we want working class people to join and even vote for us in greater numbers. We should also be encouraging unions that are not currently affiliated to affiliate to the party.

CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT PLANS

There is nothing wrong with any form of agreement entered into willingly between a candidate or MP, a trade union representing ordinary working people and a CLP.

PRIMARIES

We believe that the proposal to introduce primaries is seriously misguided, poses both a political and a financial risk to the party, devalues party membership and the political levy, and threatens the party with improper interference in selections. The proposal was made without consultation and we believe that there is little support within the party for it.

1. Should individuals who register as supporters in London ahead of the mayoral selection be charged a small sum to finance the administration of the primary? In France this was One Euro.

No. The Tory primary that selected Boris Johnson in 2007 attracted only 20,019 voters out of 5.4m eligible, and selected a dangerous right-wing buffoon who has damaged London and undermined his party leader. Labour does not need to reproduce that disaster.

2. Should the Labour Party consider the use of new methods of voting, including voting on-line, in undertaking the London mayoral selection primary?

On-line voting for a nominal fee without the involvement of local authority returning officers and the checks available to them is a recipe for major electoral fraud, and manipulation by political opponents. Large scale primaries in the US are only possible because of the involvement of state officials. This does not prevent manipulation such as “Operation Chaos” where Republicans were encouraged by right-wing talk-show host Rush Limbaugh to try to prevent the selection of Barak Obama.

3. Do you agree that primaries should be used in certain parliamentary selections? If so, what criteria should the party follow in deciding when a primary should be used?

There is no demand from party members for this. It would devalue party membership.

4. Who should be eligible to take part in a constituency-based primary selection?

Apart from party members, the only others with a good claim to some form of participation are trade union levy-payers.

FAIRNESS IN LABOUR SELECTIONS

We believe that the important principles in selections are (i) ensuring equal access to members and affiliates for all candidates; (ii) positive action to assist under-represented groups of people especially working class, female and BAME candidates; (iii) party members get the candidate at the end of the process who they most want. To achieve this we propose:

1. Spending limits should be low, with the emphasis on a small number of direct communications – including no more than two printed leaflets in the selection period.

2. All branches (members and affiliates) should be entitled to interview candidates of their choice prior to making nominations.

3. Nominations from affiliated organisations should be submitted by the branches or organisation that is affiliated, not by other units of the parent organisation.

4. All elected representatives should be subject to mandatory reselection prior to every election, as local councillors are now.

5. In principle, the shortlist should be acceptable to those participating in the selection. Members present at the selection meeting should therefore be allowed to add validly nominated candidates to the shortlist, provided that a proposal to this effect is received from at least 5% of those members entitled to participate in time for the issue of postal ballots.