

BUILDING A ONE NATION LABOUR PARTY

INTERIM REPORT

Ray Collins

INTRODUCTION

Earlier this year Ed Miliband announced plans to build a One Nation Labour Party rooted deeper in the lives of working people and their communities.

In our discussions since then over the summer, he has repeatedly impressed on me that his starting point is that too many people are turning away from politics which they regard as detached from their lives.

For proof of this we need to look no further than this Tory-led government. It listens only to the big donors, the corporate lobbyists, the richest and the most powerful - never to you. That's why we say David Cameron is out of touch with ordinary British families and is always standing up for the wrong people.

If we are to succeed in changing Britain, we must change the way politics is conducted in this country. And that begins with having the courage to accept we have to change too.

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In the last three years, Ed has already begun turning that around. He has opened up our party to registered supporters, our campaigns to local communities, and our policy making process to good people with good ideas both inside and outside Labour.

Now we must go further in letting ordinary people back into our politics. Ed is determined that One Nation Labour reaches out to all walks of life, that we campaign as a grassroots movement for change in every community, and that we give more people more say in the future of our country.

As we debate and make these changes we must not forget that we are, and always will be, the people's party. Our origins should not only be a source of continuing pride but also a guide to how we can build again for the future. The Conservatives and the Liberals emerged out of elites inside Parliament, origins that still affect their outlook. Labour was formed by working men and women in trade unions and socialist societies outside of Westminster. Ed wants to mend, not end, that relationship with the trade unions. He wants to deepen our link with working people, not weaken it. Indeed, Ed's intention is to build a different kind of politics which does more to engage people from every walk of life, but particularly working people in trade unions.

One of the principles that will continue to underpin the relationship is a collective engagement with our party, for trade unions. These are hugely important civil society institutions in their own right which, week in and week out, fight for working people.

They have a wealth of experience, knowledge, research and ideas based on their role in the workplace and communities. That is expressed collectively through their organisations and Labour benefits from that rich shared experience. We should not and will not lose that vital contribution. Indeed, if our party did not already have a close relationship with trade unions this report would be recommending that we build a link to become One Nation Labour.

But for too long we have operated with structures which were laid down in a different era. New technologies that were not available when we created our old structures now offer opportunities for new forms of communication and community activism with our members, affiliates and supporters. I hope we can take this opportunity to build a truly 21st century party.

I have often heard Ed say that the three million working people currently affiliated to Labour through these unions - shop-workers, nurses, engineers, bus drivers, construction workers, workers from public and private sector - are the most under-utilised asset in British politics.

So Ed has set out a bold vision to mobilise these individuals and build Labour into a mass party, growing our membership from 200,000 to 500,000, 600,000 or more.

He wants working people to have a real choice about affiliating to Labour - and then a real voice as individuals within the party.

The changes to make this possible will be put to a Special Conference this Spring because Ed has said he wants them agreed well before the General Election. They will then take time to implement, as we manage the organisational and financial implications of any such change. We need to debate what additional rights these new affiliated members should have. And we need to consider how, once this new system is in place, we would address consequences for other structures in the party, such as the Conference and the electoral college to elect our leader and deputy leader.

Nor should we think change of this scale is going to be achieved by a simple rule change or amendment to our constitution. Instead, radical and sustainable reform can only succeed with us working together. This is what it means to build a movement.

Indeed, in this new world, there will be greater responsibility on the Labour party to reach out to working people and show them that Labour can make a difference to their lives. Because affiliated members will only choose to join our party if that is the case.

Importantly, these proposals go with the grain of the last big reforms of the Labour 20 years ago.

Tellingly, when Clause IV of the constitution was redefined to make Labour's core political aims relevant to the contemporary world, the new wording rightly still recognised that "Labour shall work in pursuit of these aims with trade unions and co-operative societies and also with voluntary organisations, consumer groups and other representative bodies".

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The latest reforms proposed by Ed are similarly built on the principle that Labour is an alliance of individuals and organisations. He knows that our links with trade unions and other affiliates are a source of strength - and recognises that in the 21st Century these links must become more transparent if they are to survive. That is one of the reasons why Ed is proposing putting constituency development plans on a standard footing.

But the scale of Ed's ambition is about more than just the relationship between the party and the unions. It is also about our relationship with the wider public, many of whom who support Labour - or might support Labour - but do not want to be members. That is why Ed has said we should look at the use of primaries to engage more people in our party, for example, to elect our candidate for the Mayor of London.

And any relationship with the people must be founded on trust. So we must ensure that everyone has confidence that our processes for selecting candidates are fair and free from manipulation. That is why Ed has said we need to strengthen the code of conduct and to introduce limits on what candidates can spend in pursuit of selection.

My initial view is that these changes can help strengthen Labour as the voice of working people so that we can better change Britain. Both Ed and I know that very great challenges lie in front of us and that these reforms will be difficult to achieve. But the prize we can win if we work together to deliver this agenda will be worth the effort.

I want to hear all the ideas from people across our movement about how we can improve the way our party works, building on Refounding Labour. You can help to make this happen by taking part in this consultation and suggesting your ideas for making our party stronger. So I want to hear from all of you and from all sections of the party. The feedback I receive from you will help to shape the final report I deliver which will be considered at a Special Conference next March.

I would therefore be very grateful to receive submissions by 24 December 2013.

These should be sent to:

labour.org.uk/onenationparty
onenationparty@labour.org.uk

or

One Nation Party
Labour Central
Kings Manor
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE1 6PA

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ray Collins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R' and a long, sweeping underline.

Ray Collins

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LABOUR PARTY AND INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF OUR AFFILIATE ORGANISATIONS.

Trade unions and affiliated organisations hold a special place inside the Labour Party. They founded the party over a century ago. Indeed, until 1918, Labour was entirely composed of affiliated organisations - individual membership was not possible. That changed after the First World War, when individuals were welcomed into the party's ranks for the first time. But recognising the continued importance of the trade unions and socialist societies, the party adopted a federal structure which amalgamated the individual membership, organised around Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs), alongside an affiliates' section.

The federal structure remains in place today and already, during this consultation, a number of party members and affiliates have said to me that while it should remain so it also has to change. There is a recognition that the connection, particularly as it relates to trade unions, must become more transparent.

Trade union affiliation fees are paid to the Labour Party out of trade union political funds. These funds are comprised of the political levy payments of individual people who chose to join a trade union. Margaret Thatcher's government established a legal right for all trade unionists to contract out of paying that levy. We do not believe there is any need to change the laws around the right of trade unions to hold political funds.

Trade unions that affiliate to the Labour Party are required to pay fees on behalf of each of their members who pay into the union's political fund. On this basis the trade unions are collectively affiliated to the party and have representation within the party's structures in proportion to the level of their affiliation.

The individual levy paying trade unionists are in turn connected to the party through their trade unions, and have the right to select trade union delegates who participate in Labour's structures at a local and national level. Individual trade unionists also have the right to cast a ballot in the election of the Labour Party Leader. They do not have the right to take part in local or parliamentary selections.

Ed Miliband has now said this process should be changed, so that instead of trade union levy-payers being automatically affiliated these individuals are instead able to make an active, deliberate choice on whether to be part of the Labour Party.

He wants them to have a real choice about affiliating to Labour - and then a real voice as individuals within the party. This new relationship is intended to transform Labour into a much bigger party of working people while also putting the link with trade unions on a modern and more secure footing. The prize is a party more rooted in the lives of working

people with many more thousands of trade unionists given the opportunity to be an active part of the Labour Party at a local level.

Ed does not want this individual relationship with trade union members to damage the collective relationship and the institutional links between the party and the union organisations. Ed wants to mend - not end - the link.

I want to hear your views on how we meet Ed Miliband's objective that "Individual Trade Union members should choose to join Labour through the affiliation fee, not be automatically affiliated" - and also how we meet the need for a collective voice inside the party.

We also recognise, and wish to learn from, existing schemes that already give trade union members the ability to make positive choices about affiliation.

The objective would be to convert as many as possible of the levy-payers of affiliated unions into individual membership of our party. The corresponding aim is a party that is stronger in the workplace, our communities and neighbourhoods, in real contact with working people from all walks of life.

I now wish to consult Labour's members, supporters and members of our affiliated organisations on what this means.

It clearly means a potential new cohort of party members. But what would their membership mean - what rights would they have, would they get all these rights immediately, and how similar or different would those membership rights look in comparison to existing CLP members of the party?

As the party Leader has acknowledged, moving to this new system of affiliation has big and historic implications for both the trade unions and the Labour Party which need to be worked through. Changes to the nature and scale of affiliated membership inevitably throw up questions about the way affiliated organisations are represented in the party and participate in its structures.

For instance, currently affiliated organisations have a 33 per cent share of the electoral college for choosing leaders and deputy leaders along with MPs and members. Each member of those organisations is balloted. Trade union members must tick a box indicating their support for Labour's values before voting. There is already a plan to introduce a new section for registered supporters worth up to 10 per cent of this college, reducing the other three to 30 per cent each. We will need to consider what implications there are for the electoral college over time, as we move to a different system.

A clear question that should be addressed during this consultation is what are the consequences for the electoral college used to elect our Leader and Deputy Leader, in particular the Trade Union and Affiliates section.

It would be very helpful to have views in relation to the following questions:

- What kind of relationship with the party do you think those individuals who choose to affiliate want or expect?
- What rights should they receive? Should their rights differ from CLP members and if so how?
- 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?
- How do we ensure that the collective voice of trade unions is still heard in the Labour Party?
- 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?
- What views do you have about the practical timeframe for agreeing and implementing changes to affiliation and related issues?
- Do you have any other ideas you wish to contribute to this review about how to deepen the relationship between Labour and working people.

2. STANDARDISING CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT PLANS.

Since the Nolan Report on party funding in the late 1990s, which formed the basis of the regulatory system we have today, Labour has moved away from the old practice of sponsorship of MPs towards the current one of support for constituency organisations. This was introduced so as to remove any question that financial support could be used to exercise influence over elected representatives, whilst recognising the legitimate and healthy role that trade unions and other organisations can play in funding local political parties.

Ed Miliband has underlined the value of local agreements between Constituency Labour Parties and trade unions, saying they help to keep parties connected to the needs of working people. However, he has also said that such agreements need to be properly regulated and overseen so that nobody can allege that individuals are being put under pressure at a local level. It is therefore intended to establish standard constituency agreements with trade unions.

- What ideas do you have about the form that such agreements should take?
- What do you think should be the process for signing off and registering such agreements?
- Do you have any other suggestions about issues raised in this section?

3. USING PRIMARIES TO ENGAGE A WIDER PUBLIC IN LABOUR'S SELECTIONS OF CANDIDATES.

Labour members are the lifeblood of our party. It is essential that the rights that come with membership are recognised and understood. Party members play a crucial role in holding their MP to account, selecting their parliamentary candidate, selecting the Leader and Deputy Leader, picking delegates for annual conference, and much more besides.

No-one knows better than the thousands of activists who spend their time knocking on doors that our party must always be reaching to Labour voters and potential Labour voters.

Ed Miliband has already opened our party out to people on the outside who do not want to become full members by introducing a registered supporters' scheme. Now he has identified the next step in opening up our politics.

Ed has proposed that, for the next London Mayoral election, Labour will use a "primary" to select our candidate. Any Londoner should be eligible to vote in that selection provided they have registered as a supporter of the Labour Party at any time up to the ballot. This draws on experience in other countries, which have seen an enormous outreach to new supporters in the course of a primary process.

He also asked for an examination of this idea in other internal party selections, such as in future parliamentary selections where a sitting MP is retiring and where the local party has dwindled so that the choice of who represents such constituencies is not limited to just a handful of people.

It would be helpful to have views and suggestions in response to the following questions:

- 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.
- Should the Labour Party consider the use of new methods of voting, including voting on-line, in undertaking the London mayoral selection primary?
- 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?
- Who should be eligible to take part in a constituency-based primary selection?
- Do you have any other suggestions about issues raised in this section?

4. ENSURING FAIRNESS AND TRANSPARENCY IN LABOUR SELECTIONS.

Ed Miliband has stressed that he wants to ensure that every candidate selection in the Labour Party happens in the fairest way. To that end, he has said that there will be a new code of conduct for those seeking selection and new spending limits in those selections, including for outside organisations as well as individual candidates. The objective is to create a level playing field for individuals who wish to become Labour candidates which is not distorted by money and resources. Similarly, election to be the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Labour Party should be a battle of ideas and ability, and never descend into an arms race over who has the money to pay for the most leaflets or the resources to make the most phone calls.

- What proposals do you have for a new code of conduct for use in candidate selections? In particular, how would you amend or add to the existing code of conduct for selections?
- What do you believe would be a fair level at which to impose a spending cap on candidates, and their supporters, in a parliamentary selection?
- What do you believe would be a fair level at which to impose a spending cap on candidates, and their supporters, in a mayoral selection or a European selection?
- What do you believe would be a fair level at which to impose a spending cap on candidates, and supporters of candidates, in elections for the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Labour Party?
- How do you believe that the code of conduct and the spending limit could best be policed and enforced?
- What activities should be banned during a selection?
- Are there any activities that the party should help to facilitate?
- What sanctions do you think should apply where the rules are breached? Do you have any other suggestions about issues raised in this section?

