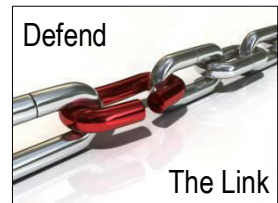


LABOUR PARTY REFORMS

Reasons to vote against



At the special conference on 1 March, Ed Miliband may well have the “Clause IV moment” his advisors sought, though Labour’s enemies are still saying unions will have too much power. His proposals, made in the wake of a Falkirk “scandal” that never was, have lost their rationale. If he wins the day, it is not because trade unions and constituency parties are enthusiastic about them, or even agree with them. Nor is it because the consultation responses – which have been totally ignored in the report - favoured them... they didn’t. It is because the trade unions and constituency parties are instinctively loyal to him and want him to win in 2015. However, we believe this is not the way to make the most radical changes ever in the relationship between the trade unions and the party they founded over a century ago.

1. The opt-in scheme proposed for trade union levy-payers will result, when union affiliations become tied in five years time to the numbers opting-in, in **a drastic cut in party funding**. Few trade union leaders seriously expect more than 10% to become “affiliated supporters”, which would mean the loss of £7million a year in affiliation fees, roughly a quarter of total party expenditure.
2. This “opt-in” scheme is presented as **more democratic, but it isn’t**. Members will pay the levy either way. What would we think if trade union members had to tick a box to say they wanted to vote in union elections, and only got a ballot if they’d done so? Or if they had to say they, individually, supported the union’s political campaigns on the NHS or the Living Wage, and money could be spent on those campaigns only if it could be attributed to those who’d ticked a box? Or if members had to say that they, individually, wanted to take part in strike ballots? “Opt-in” will reduce union affiliation numbers even if their members’ support for Labour rises. Many leading Labour MPs admit that they plan to use that reduction to cut union votes within the Party, which would be to the advantage of the Party machine, not of individual trade union or CLP members
3. **“Registered supporters” of the party** have up to now paid nothing. So few have been recruited (their numbers are secret) that they are to be ignored and recruitment is to start again. ‘Progress’ has always called for their involvement but they were supposed not to be involved in leadership elections until 50,000 were recruited. Nevertheless, they are to be given votes in both leadership elections and a London primary with immediate effect, equivalent to the votes of individual members of the party who pay £45 a year.
4. Some constituency members may be alarmed about a **possible reduction in the value of their votes in leadership elections**, as large numbers of trade union levy payers could in theory be recruited as “affiliated supporters” with a vote equal to party members. However, **most trade union levy payers, including many who have voted in the past, will lose their right to vote entirely** because they won’t have previously ‘opted in’. And unlike registered supporters, they will continue to pay roughly a levy of £7 a year on average, often for most of their working lives. Almost all that money funds the Labour Party.
5. We may be relieved that the higher threshold proposed in the leadership

elections – 15% rather than the current 12.5% - isn't higher still, as was originally proposed. However, it still would have meant that **two out of the last five Labour Party leaders would have been elected unopposed** (John Smith as well as Gordon Brown), and perhaps Tony Blair too. **The elections that did take place would have had fewer candidates** (two not four when Neil Kinnock was elected and probably just two in the most recent election, both called Miliband).

6. The **primary proposed to select a Mayoral candidate for London** in 2015 (against the wishes of the London Labour Party) **will virtually exclude trade unionists** (who currently have 50% of an electoral college) because there will not be time to recruit many affiliated supporters with a general election in between. "Registered supporters" will be included, however, which is a recipe for electoral fraud and manipulation by the party's opponents.
7. The **administrative problems of this package of proposals cannot be over-estimated**. Is there any sense in having, effectively, four tiers of party membership or pseudo-membership: (1) Individual members. (2) Trade unionists who are "affiliated supporters". (3) Trade unionists who are box-tickers but not "affiliated supporters", which could happen for many

reasons (administrative error or failure to pass on details; inaccurate details on the union database; people with more than one address; people eligible but not on electoral roll like 6m others). (4) "Registered supporters" who pay a minimal one-off "administration fee". Ensuring that the Labour Party's database is consistent with each of 14 union membership systems when people change address or jobs will be a permanent problem. This will be a constant source of ammunition for a hostile media when people get a ballot paper and shouldn't or vice versa. It is hard enough for unions to keep track of home addresses for their internal purposes, as they normally relate to members in their workplace.

8. **If you were prepared to take financial risks and wanted a mass party with a working class base, the right approach would have been to slash membership fees** from £45 – well above the reach of many of our voters – and **make sure that our policies are much more attractive to trade unions and working class people**. As it is, the offer to trade unionists is not very attractive – to get a vote they already have and be allowed to attend meetings (never Labour's greatest attraction) without a vote. **No real influence. No real democracy** – unlike in their own unions where conferences and executives still do make policy.

Conference Procedures

The Collins report proposes two rules changes as well as its recommendations. They are on two separate subjects (Leadership elections and Primaries) and deal with different chapters. Normal practice in the Labour Party is to have separate votes on separate rule changes. This would allow you to decide your views and vote separately on each proposal. This may not happen because the NEC were told that procedure was up to the Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC) whilst the CAC were told that the NEC had decided to have only one vote! Please consider sending this emergency motion to the NEC & CAC:

"This CLP urges the NEC/CAC to ensure that there are separate votes at the Special Conference on 1 March on the report and on each rule change in line with normal procedure."