



### **Report of National Executive Committee meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2014**

It is a privilege to represent you on the NEC. I feel the responsibility of that at every meeting I attend, but no more so than when we met on Tuesday afternoon. Because it was at that meeting that we took decisions that, if passed by our Special Conference on the 1<sup>st</sup> March, have the capacity to change the direction of UK politics and our party.

Through my regular NEC reports and constituency visits I've consulted members up and down the country on the Collins Review and I've read many of the submissions you sent in to HQ. I know that you were concerned about where the review might take us. I hope however that you have been reassured by the final recommendations put forward. I voted in favour of those and wanted to tell you why;

#### **Protecting the rights of members**

When Ed Miliband first announced this review he started from the, admirable, position of wanting to involve more people in our party. But, as I argued to him at the time, this could not be at the expense of member's rights. There has to be a reason for - and a value to - membership. If there is not our ambition of being a mass movement will never be realised.

So my red line in the negotiations of the past months has always been protection of the rights members have.

I know that you were concerned about maintaining the right to select our parliamentary candidates and the introduction of primaries. I do not believe the case has yet been made for primaries in the UK political system and I made clear to the leadership that I would not vote for a proposal that would introduce these in parliamentary selections. I was pleased therefore that we were able to restrict this proposal to the London Mayoral selection, which could be argued as such an exceptional selection that it requires an exceptional process.

#### **One Member One Vote**

The Electoral College for leadership elections, which gave multiple voting to some people, was unfair and diminished the voice of grassroots members. So I am pleased that this to be abolished and replaced by a new system which fully extends the principle of One Member One Vote.

Involving our affiliated and registered supporters in that leadership ballot allows those who declare support for our party values a voice in its future direction. That is good balance between the involvement of those outside of our party with the rights of existing membership.

I understand the concern that some have expressed about the PLP's responsibility for nominating and shortlisting leadership candidates but our Leader has to command the respect of our parliamentary representatives so it's right that they have the ability to present options that can command enough parliamentary following to avoid destructive in-fighting.

#### **A more transparent link with our TU affiliates**

Arguably one of the most difficult of the reforms was the change to the way our relationship with our Trade Union affiliates is managed.

I am pleased that the federal structure of the party is to be retained and that our trade union and other affiliates will continue to have a collective constitutional role inside the party on a more transparent basis.

It is essential that the change to individual affiliation for trade union members should be managed in a way that protects the long term financial sustainability of the party. A 5 year transition delivers this and gives time for both the party and our trade union affiliates to set out to members why they should become affiliate supporters in their own right. And it is fair that at that point the scale of a trade union's collective affiliation shall be governed by the number of levy payers they have brought to the party.

### **A closer link with trade unionist members**

As a trade unionist I really welcome the fact that individual levy paying trade unionists will have the ability to become affiliated supporters. One of the key aspects of this change is that they will then provide their individual details direct to the party. This will allow local constituency parties to contact them directly and involve them in their activity.

The extent of that change should not be underestimated. Gone will be the days where CLP Secretaries receive the odd affiliation fee cheque from a local trade union branch with one contact name at the bottom who they never again hear from. This change will enable meaningful relationships to develop and with that a better understanding and representation of working people's rights within our party.

### **Fairer selections**

Too many members feel that standing as a party representative is unrealistic – that our selection processes are too long and too expensive to allow them to compete with those fortunate enough to have large amounts of money or time to spend on them.

The changes Collins proposes to our selections will open up these structures to many more members than at present.

The cap on selection spending I've argued for, for some time, will create a more level playing field and the stipulation that selections should be as short as possible should allow more people with day jobs to participate.

### **Power to the people**

It's easy to be cynical in politics, particularly so right now on the back of the expenses scandal, but the creation of new rights for affiliate and registered supporters sends a powerful message from our party to the electorate. It's a message that says "welcome". This might not mean that your CLP meetings are going to change overnight but we're the only party taking these steps and we should use them – along with the work Arnie Graf is doing to bring our Party into our communities - as a catalyst for change in our villages, towns and cities.

I would have like to have seen the review go further. I have, since before I even joined the NEC, argued that there should be greater CLP representation on the committee - 6 CLP representatives, on a committee of 33 is woeful. But this set of negotiations was always unlikely to deliver that change and we shouldn't throw the baby out with the bathwater. It is however something I remain committed to and will continue to fight for.

It is vital that the Implementation Group which Collins recommends to oversee the party reforms is representative of the party as a whole, that the process of change is managed carefully and that our members and CLPs are engaged in this process.

I promised, as your voice on the NEC, to always put members first. I know not everyone will agree with all the Collins recommendations but I hope my engagement with you and this explanation of why I voted in favour of the proposals reassures you that your concerns are heard and shaping the debate about the future of our party.

*This is my personal account of this meeting & should not be taken as the official record,  
but please do pass on to other Labour members who may be interested.*