

Build a democratic labour movement



Policy-making in the labour movement should be the property of conference and duly-elected committees, not of a designated “Leader” and their “Leader’s Office” handing down announcements.

Even when the announcements-from-on-high are left-wing — as they have been sometimes under the Corbyn leadership — that they are announcements from on high tells against the chances of the labour movement mobilising sufficiently to convince the electorate of the policies, or to get them enforced against ruling-class resistance.

What we want above all is a leader who will help vitalise a real democracy-from-below in the labour movement, and clear away the very large Blair-era elements still in the party structure. In hustings and nomination meetings, we will be posing our criteria, of which the “charter” below is a first draft.

A democratic conference must be Labour’s sovereign decision-making body. Conference should set the policy agenda, pass motions that determine policy and what is included in the manifesto, and decide the party’s direction. Motions should be published as they are submitted, with regular updates. More conference time for policy debate, and contributions from delegates.

As in the past, there should be a rolling programme passed by conference each year as the basis for the manifesto and campaigning.

Party bodies, representatives and leaders must recognise and implement conference policy and decisions. Abolish the National Policy Forum. Conference decisions should be published, easily accessible, and advertised.

Establish the right to diversity of opinion within broad Labour values. Establish the right to organise political groupings within the party. Amend rule 214(b) to remove the (confused and damaging) inference that groupings that are not official party bodies are a problem.

Expulsions should be only for opposing Labour in elections; for gross anti-worker, racist, sexist, or otherwise discriminatory behaviour; and for abuse of power or sabotage of party functioning – and only after a hearing, with prior notice of charges, with the National Constitutional Committee. All

those penalised should have a proper right to appeal. Cases should not be rushed or allowed to drag on without prompt resolution.

Ensure adequate notice of and accessible information about all democratic party meetings. All conference documents, including reports, policy documents, motions, records of decisions, votes and proceedings, should be published as far in advance of/as soon after meetings as possible. NEC agendas, papers and minutes should be published, outside exceptional cases. The NEC should return to taking questions and comments on its annual report at conference; delegates should vote whether to approve it, with the right to refer back any part of the report.

Maintain the union link. Revive and expand the link at local level by getting more genuine union delegates to CLPs, rooted in functioning branches and workplaces. Support a drive for democracy in the unions.

A drive to establish CLP-level YL branches/groups – with representation in CLPs, but autonomous, with freedom to discuss, campaign and recruit new members. Give Youth Officers access to data for young members in their area.

Move as fast as possible towards a national YL conference based on delegates from local groups, and affiliates; and not made inaccessible by cost.

Let YL have its own democratic constitution, decided by its conference, and control the staff and administrative support it gets nationally and regionally.

Re-establish Labour Students, with its own democratic constitution decided by its conference. A conference based on delegates from Labour Clubs, not made inaccessible by cost.

Automatic “open selections” for all parliamentary candidates before each election.

CLPs should have the right to submit both a policy motion and a rule change to each conference. The NEC should be allowed to submit rule changes only with the same deadlines as everyone else, not at the last minute as currently.