

GMB CONGRESS 2018

CEC STATEMENT

POLITICAL STRATEGY AND LABOUR PARTY REFORM

WE ARE

GMB

UNION

CEC Statement

Political Strategy Update and Labour Party Reform

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In 2012, GMB Congress passed a ground breaking political strategy to put working people back at the heart of the Labour Party.
- 1.2 Over the last 6 years, GMB has worked to increase participation in politics, to support members standing to be candidates, councillors and MPs. We have campaigned in elections, influenced changes to legislation and policy for the benefit of our members, taken GMB issues to parliaments in the UK and Europe, and we have continued to campaign in local government as continued austerity impacts on services and communities.
- 1.3 But also in those 6 years, much has changed in Labour – in part as a result of the work GMB has done to elect politicians who share our values. The Labour leadership are now proudly trade union. We work in partnership with Shadow Secretaries of State and Shadow Ministers on what a real agenda for government looks like. The 2017 Labour manifesto would have made practical improvements to the lives of GMB members and millions of working people.
- 1.4 In the last year alone, in Parliament our members have given evidence to the BEIS select committee on precarious work and fake self employment, making headlines on the back of it. Utilities workers from the NW have lobbied MPs, our members in Southern Region have spoken to MPs and the Shadow Health Secretary about the shocking situation at Coperforma, resulting in an increased profile of these industrial issues, greater awareness and mounting pressure for change. Reps attended a debate on defence and shipbuilding held by a GMB backed MP. Our Parliamentary group heard about the Making It campaign and signed up our manufacturing pledge, while MP after MP signed up to end the Pay Pinch. At the end of last year, a Yorkshire region campaign came to fruition when the government gave in, and said foster carers would be entitled to 30 hours of free child care. When Bombardier jobs were at risk, we lobbied at a European level and ensured detailed evidence we submitted to the Northern Ireland Select Committee. GMB MPs and Peers consistently raise issues affecting our members inside Parliament and campaign alongside us across the country, in every region and nation.
- 1.5 In Wales the Welsh Labour Government, working in Social Partnership with Trade Unions & Employers, via the Workforce Partnership Council and the Economic Partnership Forum. Crucial policies on everything from blocking the Trade Union Act in Wales, to gaining better protections for care workers; from giving schools support staff a right to training through to maintaining Union Learning funding have been delivered through political action.
- 1.6 We are making a practical difference through politics.
- 1.7 Congress reaffirms our commitment to the Labour Party, to putting working people at the heart of the Party we formed, and fighting for Labour governments at all levels.
- 1.8 With so much accomplished, and with the Labour Party looking at how to change and improve Party structures on the back of hugely increased membership, it is time to update our political strategy and re-state our purpose within Labour.

2. Party Reform

- 2.1 A vibrant, flourishing Party with over half a million member's needs structures and resources fit for the modern era. But those structures must always include and respect the collective voice and decision making processes of the trade unions that founded our Party.
- 2.2 Labour was founded on the principle of collectivism, and giving a voice to working people through politics. The clue is in the name: Labour Party.
- 2.3 Labour Boroughs like Barking and Dagenham where GMB have been subject to threats from the labour council that the local party "will break the GMB". It's this attitude that steers our members away from Labour Support.
- 2.4 GMB will never cede ground to those who believe individualism and online polls are a replacement for the collective voice of working people. We will staunchly defend the collective voice of trade union members within the Labour Party, and accept no dilution of our members' voice within Labour's structures and policy making process.
- 2.5 This includes within the selection and re-selection process for Parliamentary candidates. Union branches must continue to have a say in who represents us, which is why we will continue to oppose mandatory re-selection of MPs which seeks to dilute the voice of unions within that process.
- 2.6 In this vein, we will ask the Party to assess the effectiveness and practicality of the affiliated supporters system. The system requires resource to administer and has not led to the sort of engagement envisaged in the Collins Review. We must look at how our collective voice is best heard within leadership contests in a way that gives members a bigger say, but is also cost effective for the Union.
- 2.7 However, there are areas where the Party needs to change to better reflect both trade union and party membership – this is an area a number of congress motions have sought to address.
- 2.8 As part of the reform process, we will argue for proper representation for young workers, for devolved parties and real engagement between the Labour Party and GMB at branch level.
- 2.9 We will argue for new rules to strengthen the relationship between Labour politicians and trade unions with a requirement for at least one year's trade union membership for all candidates standing for public office, and to insist that all Labour Politicians, at whatever level of Government, remain members of an appropriate Trade Union.
- 2.10 We will work with Labour to breathe new life into our local links and ensure the affiliation process at all levels works for working people and the Party alike - from the NEC to Regional and branch level, always ensuring the voice of our members is heard and that there is a link between our members and structures and the appropriate Party unit.
- 2.11 Part of this will be ensuring that there are transparent, and uniform, party structures and standing orders across CLPs, that aid, rather than limit, participation.
- 2.12 We will push for more and better ways for trade unionists to get involved in the Party and for all local parties to have a Branch Trade Union Officer.

- 2.13 We will also push for increased accountability of Council Leaders to the Party they represent.
- 2.14 Hundreds of thousands of GMB members' jobs – and services we all rely on - depend on decisions made in local government. Many Council Leaders are working hard in the face of unprecedented cuts to local government. However, in some areas there is frustration and anger among GMB members at the behaviour of Council Leaders who would seek to use austerity as a cloak for driving down pay, terms and conditions and to privatise services. Others have sought to use their position to disrupt or prevent union organisation or recognition, with one Council Leader in Barking and Dagenham making it his stated aim to attack GMB and our members.
- 2.15 Council Leaders, who are representing the Party we helped to found, should not be allowed to attack our members' pay, terms and conditions or refuse to recognise GMB where we have a legitimate presence, in the name of our own Party.
- 2.16 Labour under Jeremy Corbyn has worked with local government unions to develop a process for addressing disputes within the Party. This processes must be strengthened, with real consequences for Councillors who refuse to act in line with the values and principles of our Party.
- 2.17 At every level in the Labour Party, those who make decisions in our name are elected - from Young Labour to the NEC, from Regional Board to elected Mayors, right through to the leader and deputy leader of the Party. It is time that trade union and Labour members have a say about who leads in local government. GMB will push for Party reform that sees Labour Council leaders elected by Electoral College, and for the Labour Party to put in place a code of conduct for Labour Councils. Our Party was founded on a set of principles that must be upheld in all levels of government.
- 2.18 BAME Labour must be reformed - while maintaining its electoral college structure - so that BAME members have a proper say in its structures, and as a result in the Labour Party. This opportunity must be taken to increase levels of diversity within the Party and political representation.
- 2.19 Young Labour must also adapt. With over 100,000 young members, the youth movement needs support and resource to organise and channel the enthusiasm and commitment of those from all backgrounds into tangible change for workers, communities and to see Labour in power. While students are an important part of youth organisation, so are young workers (some of whom are students too). Much more must be done to ensure the voice of young workers is heard, and that party structures don't inadvertently present barriers to participation. So too must we ensure that Young Labour activists understand that role and need for collective decision making in our movement – too often the call for OMOV is done without regard for trade union structures, processes and democracy.
- 2.20 GMB will work with Young Labour to educate and organise young workers so that the youth movement is just that – one movement.
- 2.21 GMB has, does and always will speak up for our members politically both inside and outside the Labour Party. We've been there since the beginning of our Party, and as families do we will disagree, but the 2017 election manifesto showed what is on the table: real, lasting and practical change for millions of working people, their families and communities.
- 2.22 GMB wants to see an open Labour Party that faces outwards, speaking to the public not ourselves.

3. Political development of GMB members

- 3.1 Currently, there are almost 100 GMB MPs, hundreds of councillors and thousands of activists across the country. That is in part thanks to the work done nationally and regionally to support our members from the first time they consider standing, through to speaking on the floor of the House of Commons. But standing for office is not for everyone, nor is it the only way to lead in politics.
- 3.2 Only 650 people will ever be an MP at any given time - and not all of them will be Labour.
- 3.3 GMB members have the ability and want to play many different roles, be that chairing a constituency, speaking on platforms or in the press about policies that help our members, in community organising or training fellow GMB members to get engaged.
- 3.4 Working through TULO and across the union movement, we have trained and developed our people to be leaders in politics. That must continue.
- 3.5 GMB reaffirms our commitment to train and support members who have union values at their core, in standing for public office, but also the long term political development of GMB members to ensure we have a voice in all aspects of political life.
- 3.6 Congress asks the union's political team to:
 - a. Continue to run candidate development training and to support GMB candidates who want to stand for office
 - b. To develop a longer term training package that will be available to members nominated by GMB regions to help GMB Political Leaders to become well rounded, fully trained political activists who can make the case for GMB members and the issues we care about. A political curriculum should be developed that begins at general awareness of why politics is important, through to how to stand for political office.
 - c. To campaign to abolish political restrictions on local government workers standing for public office that effectively ban our local government members from representing their areas politically.
 - d. Coordinate political action to elect Labour representatives with our regions and activists, supporting and growing activism through training, communication strategies, social media activity and collaborating with the Labour Party on community organising and workplace projects.

4. Making a difference through policy

- 4.1 When something happens in the workplace, we organise industrially, but often there is a political and policy solution too.
- 4.2 The Labour Party was formed as the political wing of the trade union movement, GMB will always ensure that the industrial needs of our members are at the heart of what and how we do things within the Labour Party.

- 4.3 GMB's political strategy will continue to ensure we play not just a full role within the Labour Party, but that we put the issues that matter to the lives of GMB members on the agenda at all levels, and to push for practical change.
- 4.4 GMB will continue to link the union's industrial agenda with political and policy action in all administrations - from local government, through devolved Governments through to the EU.
- 4.5 We expect and welcome the support of GMB backed politicians in achieving those aims.