

ISLINGTON NORTH CLP's SUBMISSION TO REFOUNDING LABOUR

May 18 2011

1. We agree that without the “determination and organisation of Labour Party members and activists” Labour would have suffered an even worse defeat in the last general election. Labour has lost 5 million votes since 1997. The great majority were working class votes, about three times more than the middle class votes lost. The need to target the potential working class vote is even more important when in successive general elections 4 out of 10 people on the electoral register (and perhaps 3.5 million not on it) do not vote, and overwhelmingly they are likely to be working class and potential Labour voters. The question then is, why did they desert Labour and what is necessary to win them back?
2. We agree that there is no need to “break the party up” but we do need to build it up.
3. In Islington North CLP we are well organised, using our existing federal structures, and we already do value the voices of individual members and trade unionists, as well as listen to and take on board the concerns and policy ideas of Labour supporters and the wider public. We always have a speaker on political education at our General Committee meeting, debate issues and motions, and deal with party business. All members are invited to our GC meetings. Our Executive Committee meanwhile deals with the management of the CLP. We also have active trade union involvement in our policy making and campaigning. The CLP gives high priority to ensuring our branches/wards function effectively, including involving members in their locality in policy making and campaigning, and representing branch/ward members' views at the GC meeting.
4. We do need to expand our membership base and reach out further to the wider society for support. In multi-cultural Islington we greatly value the active support of local community groups at election time; however we note that many of these loyal supporters do not join the party. We also recognise that supporters on benefits and low incomes cannot afford to join, and that means of drawing these people into our activities need to be explored. If however we have a system of “registered supporters” this should not be allowed to undermine the attraction of party membership – having a formal say in party decisions, selections and elections – and the commitment that party members show and bring to Labour. We need to expand membership but not devalue it. The cost of membership fees should not be a bar to recruiting new members.
5. The national party should look and learn from how local parties have successfully engaged with local people in their neighbourhoods on local issues. In the run up to the 2010 general and local elections – working with Islington South & Finsbury CLP – we consulted the public on our manifesto for local government. And in the elections our MP Jeremy Corbyn doubled his majority and Labour won back Islington Council. We achieved these electoral advances by listening to the electorate and

- offering popular policies in our manifesto – including free school meals for children up to eleven years and a £100 council tax rebate for over 65s – that motivated party members and supporters to campaign for Labour.
6. The consultation document focuses on structural changes and ignores policy issues. We believe this to be a mistake. We need to be proud of some of the achievements of the last government – SureStart centres, decent homes improvements, Building Schools for the Future – but at the same time we need to acknowledge their policy mistakes – the Iraq war, inadequate investment in new build social housing, ending the 10p income tax rate, the 75p pension increase.
 7. We need to acknowledge that in terms of policy the party leadership did not listen to the membership sufficiently, and this led to a combination of unpopular policies and declining membership that made it harder to communicate our policies to the electorate. Members who feel ignored and uninvolved are not inclined to be active. INCLP and some of our individual members have made submissions to the National Executive Committee and the National Policy Forum without ever getting an acknowledgement, let alone feedback.
 8. In terms of reform of party democracy, INCLP has already made a submission on the Labour Party consultation document “Partnership into Power – review of Labour Party policy making”.
 9. We need more active involvement of trade union members in the party. Improving the way the Labour Party-trade union link at all levels is crucial. We need to encourage more trade union affiliations to CLPs and work with and involve trade union members in our campaigning at local level. Selection procedures for candidates for public office should not diminish the current rights of trade union delegates and candidates from trade unions. Further the rights of trade unions as affiliated organisations within the party at national and regional conferences should be maintained. The party’s federal structure (and the involvement of millions of affiliated trade union members in the party) should be maintained and strengthened as it grounds the party in the concerns that ordinary people have both at work and in their communities.
 10. On the need to rejuvenate current party structures and improve democracy and membership involvement, where local parties work well, using existing structures, there is effective local campaigning that both involves members and engages the public. This is the case in INCLP as described above in points 3 and 5.
 11. All party candidates seeking to stand for elected public office must be democratically selected by party members in that locality.
 12. It is important that Labour Groups of Councillors have good links with, and are accountable to, local party structures. In INCLP, our Labour Group Councillors attend party meetings and work with the local party on local policy forums that engage both members and the public.
 13. Our party must seek to reflect the diversity of the communities we serve, in terms both of membership and of those who hold party or elected public

- office. We must seek to ensure that party positions and activities are accessible to disabled members.
14. We believe that Labour's leader and deputy leader should be elected by an electoral college of individual members and affiliated members paying the political levy. This would enhance the accountability of the leadership as well as the involvement of members. We see no reason why MPs and MEPs should have an additional vote in such elections. We believe that the threshold number of nominations by MPs should be reduced and a threshold number of CLPs introduced in order to broaden the field of candidates.
 15. If the party is to stage an annual summer weekend festival, a wider range of organisations than those mentioned in the document should be invited to help and participate.
 16. Young Labour should be autonomous, self-governing and adequately funded by the party with full policy making powers and staff support. We welcome the £1 membership rate for new young members.
 17. Islington North is one of the largest and most successful CLPs in the country, the MP doubled his majority and Labour took back the council. All wards are active and functioning. Other CLPs were cited as examples in the Refounding Labour Document we think Islington North should be cited as an example of a successfully functioning CLP.
 18. The nature of politics in Britain is going to change with the Tory/Lib Dem cuts – people will come back to Labour as long as Labour becomes the people's party with policies and actions that show that we are on their side. Policies to protect public services and jobs, for peace and prosperity.
 19. Many people left the party over Labour's policies in Iraq, Trident, housing.
 20. The national party ignores the grassroots – we should resubmit our submission made to the Partnership in Power Review at the end of 2010 which states the need for the national party to listen to the members more. (see below).
 21. The Labour Party should include and involve a broad spectrum of people.
 22. The UK Citizens Movement has campaigned for a London Living Wage which when implemented has improved conditions for the poor in London. There is great campaigning energy in that organisation - politics with energy and fun. The party should learn from this organisation and also consider more paid community organisers.
 23. Labour Party Conference is too expensive for CLPs to send delegates which results in fewer people attending each year.
 24. All the submissions to the Refounding Labour Consultation should be made public.

Partnership into Power – The Review - Suggested points for submission by INCLP: (Previously submitted in November 2010)

1. All the Labour leadership candidates recognised that party members are not adequately involved in party policy making.
2. The active involvement of members in party policy making makes the party stronger and our policies more relevant to the people we aspire to represent.
3. If party units and members had been listened to about the public desire for more progressive policies - such as building more council housing, progressive taxation, scrapping ID cards and Trident and public ownership of railways - Labour could have avoided defeat at the last General Election and still be in government.
4. Members must have a clear and transparent process whereby their policy idea can be submitted to party annual conference and be voted upon to become party policy.
5. Feedback to party units and members on the progress and outcome of their policy idea within the process is crucial.
6. Annual Conference must remain the sovereign policy making body of the Labour Party with voting on policies and conference decisions acted upon by the leadership.
7. In relation to Annual Conference, members, via party units, must be able to submit motions, amendments to policy documents. Also, delegates must be able to move reference back on sections of policy documents at conference. The nonsense of all or nothing policy making must end, with policy documents voted upon section by section. The Conference Arrangements Committee must facilitate democratic debate on policy at Annual Conference, not block it by using very restricting "contemporary" criteria and other shoddy fixes. Prioritisation and compositing of motions must also not be used to restrict policy options open to conference to debate and vote upon, rather the intention must be to maximise decision making on such policy options.
8. The National Policy Forum must be reformed to be much more open and democratic, and be made accountable to, and involve, party units and members in its policy making process. Party units and members must be able to submit amendments to policy documents being considered by the NPF, and a workable process with timescales and resources to facilitate this must be developed. Where the NPF cannot reach a consensus on a policy, minority positions should be voted upon at Annual Conference.
9. Trade unions at all levels must be fully involved in party policy making.
10. Local policy forums must feedback accurately the actual policy content they generate into the party policy making process.
11. The policy making process must be a genuine rolling programme approved by party annual conference, with all policy areas being covered.

12. Party policy must feed into the party general election manifesto in a democratic and transparent fashion that includes the widest possible consultation within the party that includes the party policy making structures.

13. When the PIP report is presented to Annual Conference 2011, party units/delegates must be able to amend it and vote on it.