

## **Refounding Labour – a party for the new generation**

### The process

Following Labour's defeat at last year's general election, there is recognition that the Labour Party is in need of fundamental change. Peter Hain is now chair of the National Policy Forum and was asked by the Labour leader, Ed Miliband, to write a consultation paper that both takes stock and asks some key questions on what Labour needs to do to regain the trust of British people. This is therefore an opportunity for the LRC to influence the change that will inevitably take place in the party.

The consultation document entitled: "Refounding Labour – a party for the new generation" has been published and members and party units have been invited to submit their views by 24 June.

The National Executive Committee will then be considering rule changes at its meeting in July to go to Labour Party annual conference in September.

### Link to the consultation document

<http://www.campaignengineroom.org.uk/uploads/63e1d1df-10bb-2eb4-e1d1-086fc8fe618d.pdf>

## **LRC guidance on making a submission**

Submissions will be more influential if they are made in your own words after discussion at a meeting.

The following points are to give guidance in discussing and writing your submission.

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 3 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 election 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 also agree there is no need to "break the party up", but we need to build it up.
3. In constituency Labour parties that are well organised, using our current federal structures, they 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.
4. We do need to expand our membership base and reach out further to wider society for support. However, registered supporters should not 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 party should look and learn from how local parties have successfully engaged with local people in their neighbourhoods on local issues.
6. The document does not even mention, let alone acknowledge, some of the policies that contributed to our defeat at the last general election – the Iraq war, not enough investment in social housing, ending 10p income tax rate, 75p pension increase, etc.

7. The party needs to acknowledge that in terms of policy it did not listen to its members enough, and therefore this led to a combination of unpopular policies and declining membership that made it harder to communicate our policies to the electorate. Members that have been ignored and not involved are not inclined to be active. [Insert local examples].
8. In terms of reform of party democracy, please see: "Partnership into Power – review of Labour Party policy making" on LRC website at: <http://l-r-c.org.uk/news/story/lrc-guidance-on-partnership-into-power-review/>
9. We do need more active involvement of trade union members in the party. Improving the way the Labour-trade union link operates 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. Need to rejuvenate current party structures but 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.
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 to, and are accountable to, local party structures.
13. Our society is very diverse and our party must therefore seek to reflect this in its membership and those that hold party or elected public office. We must also ensure party positions and activities are accessible to disabled members.
14. Labour's leader and deputy leader should be elected by an electoral college of individual members and the affiliated members paying the political levy.
15. If the party is to stage an annual summer weekend festival, in addition to those organisations mentioned in the document other organisations should also 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.

### Making a submission

Submissions can be made up to 24 June either:

- Via the Labour Party website at: [members.labour.org.uk/RefoundingLabour](http://members.labour.org.uk/RefoundingLabour)
- Or in writing to:  
Peter Hain MP  
Refounding Labour  
The Labour Party  
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London  
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**Gary Heather, Coordinator, LRC Labour Party Liaison Unit, 4 May 2011**