

LABOUR PARTY-UNION LINK THE WAY FORWARD



OBJECTIVES

1. Meeting Ed Miliband's aspiration "*to change the way individual Trade Unionists are affiliated to the Labour Party..... Individual Trade Union members should choose to join Labour through the affiliation fee, not be automatically affiliated*".
2. Meeting trade union aspirations for a continuing collective voice in the affairs of the party they founded, and sustainable levels of voting & representation
3. Meeting the shared aspirations for individual trade unionists to play a greater role in the life of the party.
4. Ensuring the party continues to receive adequate funding, through trade union affiliations, accurately described by Frances O'Grady as the "cleanest money in politics".

PROPOSED PRINCIPLES

1. **Membership categories:** The party has traditionally had two classes of members which until recently were explicitly stated in the party rules:
 - a. **Affiliated members** (i.e. trade unions and socialist societies,), and
 - b. **Individual members**to which Ed Miliband wishes to add a third, namely members of affiliated organisations who wish to join ("opt in" to) a new category of individual membership which we might call
 - c. **Associate members.**This should be accepted provided that associated members are granted equal rights with individual members in the election of the leader (& deputy leader) and in the selection of candidates for public elections. ***Thus, wherever members of trade unions exercise their rights as individuals, they do so as "associate members", but where they exercise them collectively, they do so as "affiliated members"***.
2. **Membership rights:** Each category of members should have the following rights:
 - a. **Affiliated members:** to be represented as at present at party conference (with 50% of the total votes and likewise at regional/national conferences), on the NEC, NPF, CAC and NCC, and through affiliations to CLPs, in order to ensure that the collective voice of each affiliate continues to be heard.
 - b. **Individual members:** to elect constituency party representatives to party conference (and regional/national conferences) to the NEC, NPF, CAC and NCC, to elect the leader and deputy leader, and to select candidates for all public elections.
 - c. **Associate members:** to elect the leader and deputy leader, and to select candidates for all public elections.
3. **Membership/affiliation Fees:**
 - a. **Affiliated members:** should continue to pay from the political levy collected on opt-out basis, consistent with presenting the collective voice of each affiliate. Affiliation fees to be based on bands of affiliation

(e.g. under 1k, 1-5k, 5-25k, 25-100k, 100-500k, 500k – 1m, over 1m), covering total membership or part only (e.g. in case of Unison).

- b. **Individual members:** shall pay on the current basis direct to the party.
 - c. **Associate members:** shall pay on a basis to be agreed via their affiliated organisation, to be collected either via check-off or by direct debit.
4. **Recruitment of Associate members:** there is a shared interest in maximising the number of associate members, which can be achieved as follows:
- a. Since that part of the political fund that is collected from associate members is essentially an accounting allocation within the fund, trade unions have considerable leeway in how it organises the process of “opting in”. For example, it can be done within the workplace rather than by communicating with members at their homes.
 - b. Once a member of an affiliated organisation “opts in” to being an associate member, they should remain so until they either leave the union (for whatever reason) or they opt-out.
 - c. On the other hand, there is no reason not to approach members who pay the (“opt-out”) political levy repeatedly, whenever a suitable opportunity presents itself. For example:
 - i. At present, leadership election ballot papers are in principle sent to all levy-payers but only those who affirm that they (1) support the party, (2) are not members or supporters of any other party or are otherwise ineligible to be members of the party, may have their votes counted.
 - ii. In future, leadership election ballot papers should similarly be sent to all levy-payers, but in addition to these affirmations, they should be asked to affirm that they wish to be associate members in order to qualify to participate and give the necessary authority to the union to collect the appropriate fee through check-off or direct debit.
 - iii. This could be done, as with individual members in the last two leadership elections (the first of which was uncontested) right up to the closing date.
 - iv. Similar exercises could be carried out with all selections of candidates for public office (prior to any relevant freeze date).

This package protects all existing rights of trade union affiliates by retaining the implied category of affiliated members (“the collective voice”) as well as the new category of associate members (“the individual voice”). In leadership elections, a turnout in Unite, for example, of 95,334 excluding unspoiled ballot papers is achievable and the participation by associate members in selections of candidates for public office would be a major advance.