

# What next after the Collins review

Anything that has lasted 100 years can't all be wrong, but it probably could do with a health check. And so it is with the union-Labour link.

Len McCluskey reminded the special conference that Unite was one of the first to embrace the principle of change. The status quo was simply not an option. As he told the conference **'He was tired of standing up pretending to speak on behalf of members who don't support Labour at the ballot box.'**



Unite's own internal polling shows that half of our members vote Labour so it's only right that our affiliation is more closely in step with actual support for the party.

We do have some concerns over union members living in London losing their chance to take part in the Mayoral primary in 2015 and Unite is impressing upon the Implementation Group that they need to deal with this as a matter of urgency. Affiliated union members in the capital must not lose their vote.

There are also concerns about what would happen if there is a leadership election before the end of the transition period. Well there isn't a vacancy and Unite is confident that if allowed to express his vision, then Ed Miliband won't just be the leader of the Labour party but also of our country too.

**Party membership currently stands at around 187,000 members. Unite alone would only need to persuade 13 per cent of our membership – just one in eight – to tick the relevant boxes to double that number.**

Ed Miliband wants a mass membership party. We can help him realize his dream but it can only be achieved by having the policies that will persuade trade unionists to sign up to Labour and give them something to vote for. **Ed has changed the political weather with his call to freeze energy prices along with his commitment to scrap the hated Bedroom Tax and the pledge to halt the destruction of our NHS by repealing the Health and Social Care Act.**

We have shared values of solidarity and the desire for social justice. Converting union members into actual party members will be tough but the prize would be great.

# Q&A The Collins Review: Let's now rebuild our party

Unite is the biggest Labour affiliated union in the UK. At present we affiliate one million members at £3 per member. In the spirit of the Collins Review, Unite's Executive Council will shortly consider whether this level of affiliation is justifiable.

Politics – and the Labour party - needs this shot in the arm. Public disaffection with all the main parties is at an all-time high, and with the Tory party manifesto being written by six wealthy men, five of them Eton educated, Labour is the only chance the people of this country have to get their voices heard.

## **Why does Unite back these proposals when they came after attacks on the union and its members in Falkirk?**

The new proposals fit in with Unite's political strategy, which is to encourage as many of our members as possible to join and get active in Labour. In Falkirk, our members were doing just that.

Unite did nothing wrong in Falkirk, as two police reports and the Labour party itself agree. However, vexatious briefing by those hostile to this union nearly destroyed the faith those members had in their party.

## **Aren't you giving away union 'power' - at conference or on the NEC?**

No. We are renewing our link with party. Crucially, Ray Collins made no mention of changes to conference or NEC composition in his report.

## **Will union members see Labour as their best chance?**

If the Labour party wants the support of ordinary working people, it needs their unions. But it can't just be left to us; Labour must demonstrate it offers a real alternative that will make a difference to our members' lives, to their families and to the communities they live in.

## **Won't cutting funds hamper Labour's general election bid?**

Unite wants Labour to be elected in 2015. They are the only alternative to the Tories and their destructive austerity policies.

So we will not let them lose the election through lack of cash, but the money we can give will be targeted very much at the campaigns and issues that matter to our members, such as the defence of the NHS and the urgent need to create jobs for our kids.

## **Are you worried that the Collins Review leaves the unions out in the cold during any leadership election?**

There will only be a leadership election if Labour fails to win the support of ordinary working people and loses the general election. If Ed Miliband is allowed to take the policies of jobs, homes and hope to the nation, then he won't just be Labour leader, but leader of our country too.

## **What next?**

The 'Implementation Group', accountable to Labour's NEC, will be charged with taking the Collins proposals forward.

For Unite, the hard work now begins. We will be working hard to persuade Labour to go to the people of this country with an agenda of change and hope, which will result not just in the financial support of Unite members, but their vote.

**For more information:** <http://labourlist.org/2014/03/we-are-grabbing-this-opportunity-with-both-hands/>

