

A framework plan for developing TUSC into 2012

The proposals below have been circulated amongst the TUSC steering committee with general agreement. However, some trade union members of the steering committee want to discuss them further amongst TUSC supporters within their unions before they formally endorse them. In accordance with the federal character of TUSC therefore, they are still draft proposals waiting for agreement by the constituent parts of the coalition.

Introduction

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) has now been in existence for 18 months. It was set up with the initial aim of enabling trade unionists, community campaigners and socialists to resist electorally the pro-austerity consensus of the establishment parties in the 2010 general election. After that election, however, a conference was held of candidates and campaign organisers which agreed to continue with TUSC for future electoral campaigns.

The position that was outlined in the TUSC founding policy statement prepared for the 2010 election remains. "The working class and peoples of Britain are facing a ruling class offensive against public services, incomes, living standards and trade union rights", we wrote, and it is "an offensive which has support across all the establishment parties". The constant mantra of Labour spokespeople since then, not of clear opposition to the austerity agenda but merely that it goes 'too far and too fast', only confirms this.

That was why, our founding statement went on, "the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition will contest elections, to show that there is a clear left-wing alternative to policies of public sector cuts, privatisation, militarism and environmental degradation".

TUSC recognised, and still does, that there can be "Labour and non-Labour candidates who agree with our policies, who share our socialist aspirations, and who will be supported by left and labour movement organisations participating in our coalition".

It was also recognised in the founding statement "that there are different strategic views about the way forward for the left in Britain, whether the Labour Party can be reclaimed by the labour movement, or whether a new workers' party needs to be established". But TUSC was and remains "united on the need for mass resistance to the ruling class offensive, and for an alternative programme of left-wing policies to help inspire and direct such resistance".

Small though they were, important steps have been taken in the last 18 months to establish TUSC and carrying out the plans outlined below is vitally necessary for its further development. The fact remains that the arguments which motivated the formation of our coalition still need to be expressed. In the age of austerity, workers still lack a political voice.

1. Elections and policy

(i) The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition should remain registered with the Electoral Commission and maintain and develop a structure that enables it to fulfil its core task. This still is, essentially, to provide an opportunity for local groups of trade unionists, community campaigners and socialist organisations who want to stand candidates in elections to appear on the ballot paper, if they so wish, as part of a wider challenge - as TUSC candidates rather than as 'Independents'.

(ii) To this end, TUSC will endeavour to co-ordinate challenges in the local elections that will take place in England, Wales and Scotland in May 2012. We will organise a conference by the end of 2011 open to local TUSC steering committees, delegates from trade union branches, and other local groups who are planning to stand candidates in the 2012 local elections in England and Wales, and will back any efforts by TUSC supporters in Scotland to organise a similar event to prepare for the Scottish council elections.

(iii) TUSC will also consider, on a case-by-case basis, endorsing candidates to stand under its banner at parliamentary and local council by-elections.

(iv) The founding TUSC statement developed for the 2010 general election remains in place, with subsequent updating revisions, as a summary of TUSC's core policies. In addition supplementary policy statements shall be developed for the 2012 local elections and other future election campaigns, to be discussed at the relevant conferences.

(v) We also confirm that, as a federal 'umbrella' organisation, participating organisations will continue to be able to produce their own supporting material, subject to electoral law, as has been the practise successfully adopted in our election campaigns to date, which allow different organisations and local campaigns to collaborate under a common banner.

2. Structure and election organisation

(i) TUSC shall continue to have a Steering Committee, comprised of one representative of the Socialist Party, the Socialist Workers Party, and the TUSC Independent Socialist Network, plus in a personal capacity, Bob Crow, Craig Johnston, Owen Herbert, Brian Caton, Nina Franklin, Chris Baugh, John McInally and Nick Wrack. The steering committee will operate by consensus.

(ii) The adherence of further organisations will be subject to the approval of the steering committee. The steering committee can also agree to expand its membership to other leading trade unionists as it decides.

(iii) TUSC supporters in Scotland shall continue to organise autonomously, with their own Scottish TUSC Steering Committee.

(iv) Local TUSC steering committees will be established, where possible, for local government areas and parliamentary constituencies where it is planned to contest seats on whatever broadly similar basis is appropriate for each.

(v) The participants in TUSC recognise that this structure remains only an interim arrangement and that discussions must continue to take place on the best way to organise the coalition as it develops in the future. Future conferences of TUSC shall make provisions to include debates on this issue.

3. Candidates

(i) Candidates from organisations participating in the Steering Committee and the Scottish TUSC Steering Committee can expect to have their nomination papers for elections authorised by the coalition nominating officer as TUSC candidates if they so request. They can also stand, if they wish, under the existing registered electoral name of their organisation.

(ii) Other prospective candidates, from local trade union organisations or other organisations, can also request to stand as TUSC candidates. All such requests shall be referred to the Steering Committee for decision.

(iii) Prospective candidates will be asked to endorse the coalition's founding core policy statement - and the relevant supplementary policy statement for the election they are contesting - but, with that provision, candidates will be responsible for their own campaign.

(iv) The Steering Committee will have the final say on all coalition seats and candidates.

(v) The Steering Committee will seek to raise funds for national campaigning. For local challenges, the normal expectation will be that local deposits and campaigns will be financed locally.

Motion from Rugby on the future development of TUSC

This meeting expresses its satisfaction with the relative progress made by TUSC candidates in the recent council elections standing on an explicitly anti-cuts programme. Furthermore, it recognises:

- The political foundations that were laid in areas where TUSC candidates stood.
- The potential support for socialist ideas amongst working class communities - the election results confirm there is a constituency for a party promoting socialist policies.
- That TUSC has the potential to become a significant political force.

This meeting confirms its determination to build on these foundations, and ways of doing that should include:

- Campaigning as TUSC, where possible as part of local anti-cuts umbrella groups, against the spending cuts, privatisation and all other attacks on working class living standards.
- Building TUSC branches up and down the country.
- Starting to prepare from now for next year's council elections and the possibility of a snap general election, using elections as a continuation of the anti-cuts campaign.
- Working with other genuine anti-cuts campaigners, community groups and organisations to select anti-cuts candidates in as many seats as possible to work alongside our TUSC candidates.

In order to make the necessary progress and ensure further development, TUSC agrees to broaden out its structure at national level to welcome representation from local TUSC branches as well as trade union branches, political organisations and independents supportive of TUSC.