



Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition,
17 Colebert House, Colebert Avenue,
London, E1 4JP

A letter to trade union national executive committee members

Dear comrade,

I am writing to invite you to consider joining the national steering committee of the recently relaunched Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

As you may recall TUSC was set-up in 2010, co-founded amongst others by the late Bob Crow, with trade unionists at its core (a brief history is available at <http://www.tusc.org.uk/txt/429.pdf>). Our founding aim was to help in the process of re-establishing a political voice for the working class given, at that point, the transformation of the Labour Party into Tony Blair's New Labour and its role in implementing the austerity unleashed by the 2007-08 financial crash.

As our name says we are a coalition and all of the component elements of TUSC have played their part alongside other campaigners in the struggles of the last decade against attacks on jobs, services and conditions – in the workplace, in our communities, and in the trade unions.

But we have also been prepared to stand in elections where necessary, believing that to leave politicians who are carrying out cuts unchallenged at the ballot box, is to voluntarily give up a weapon that could be used in the anti-austerity struggle.

This is particularly so in local government, in which councillors are the direct employers and providers of local services. In this situation to positively decide not to have an anti-austerity candidate standing when cuts are being made would be to give an effective vote of confidence to the local authority's policies.

Selective stands

The background to TUSC's activity changed dramatically when Jeremy Corbyn, my fellow comrade on the Labour backbenches in the 1980s, was unexpectedly elected as leader against the overwhelming opposition of the capitalist establishment.

This was a development which every component of TUSC wholeheartedly supported – the RMT, for example, officially represented on the TUSC steering committee since 2012, was the second biggest donor to both of Jeremy's leadership campaigns, in 2015 and 2016, behind only the 1.4

million-member Unite union. Although, as we warned, 'New Labour' supporters remained entrenched in particular in the Parliamentary Labour Party and council Labour Groups, here was an opportunity to re-establish working class socialist political representation on a mass basis.

In response TUSC recalibrated its electoral activity, not standing in either the 2017 or 2019 general elections. We only contested local elections on a strictly selective basis, against councillors who opposed Jeremy and who were continuing to implement austerity policies in the council chamber, until suspending all electoral activity in 2018.

But now, with Sir Keir Starmer's leadership of the Labour Party, the situation has changed once again. The opportunities for achieving working class political representation within the Labour framework created by Jeremy's leadership have receded, against the background of the deep economic and social crisis triggered by the Covid pandemic.

Consequently, the TUSC steering committee has agreed to resume standing candidates in future elections, although still with due regard to particular circumstances, and to seek to broaden participation in the steering committee from the trade unions especially. Hence this invitation to you.

How TUSC functions

Alongside the official representatives of the RMT the TUSC national steering committee has also included at various points national officers or national executive committee members of other unions – from the PCS civil servants union, the National Union of Teachers, the Fire Brigades Union, and the Prison Officers Association.

While the latter have participated in a personal capacity, where there have been a group of TUSC supporters on a national executive, they have had the provision to select individual executive members from the group to represent them on the steering committee.

Regarding accountability, the current rules for how TUSC operates, available on our website at www.tusc.org.uk/txt/384.pdf, stipulate that the steering committee will only take decisions by consensus.

This safeguard means that no committee member – including yourself if you were to accept our invitation (or a representative if there is a group of TUSC supporters on your executive) – can be 'bounced' into lending their name to an action taking place under the TUSC banner if they feel strongly about a particular matter.

But joining the committee will allow you to help shape TUSC in the period ahead – and strengthen its hand in the necessary debate in the labour and trade union movement on what needs to be done politically to fight back in the challenging new era of the Covid crisis and its aftermath.

I look forward to your response.

In solidarity,

Dave Nellist

TUSC National Chairperson

Former Labour MP 1983-1992