



10th November, 2021

Dear comrades,

I am writing to you on behalf of the All-Britain Steering Committee of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) to explore if we can establish some level of collaboration. We would be very pleased if the result of such a discussion was you deciding to take advantage of the electoral banner which TUSC offers. But at the very least we would hope that we can avoid a repeat of the unfortunate current circumstance where, without any lines of communication between us, candidates representing both TUSC and Beacon Liverpool are contesting the same Liverpool council by-election in Kirkdale ward on November 18th.

With Keir Starmer's 'New Blairism' now dominating the Labour Party, the question of how to build a mass working-class socialist force is urgently posed. I was pleased to see that Beacon Liverpool has drawn the conclusion, as have we, that a vital part of doing so is contesting local elections. Your manifesto for socialist municipalism appears to have many demands in common with our current 'core policies', such as a massive council house building programme. Given Liverpool City Council's tremendous history in taking on the Thatcher government in the 1980s, and the brutal attacks Liverpool faces now, it is perhaps not surprising that a new organisation in Liverpool is fighting on this plane.

TUSC does not think that the debate on how to build a political voice for the working class will be resolved overnight. We see steps forward coming from various sources, including citywide campaigning organisations like Beacon Liverpool. It is also significant that in the wake of Jeremy Corbyn's defeat within the Labour Party some steps forward have been taken by the trade union movement. The 2021 policy conference of my own union, Unite, made a clear call for Labour councils to refuse to implement any more cuts and instead to set "no-cuts needs-based budgets". Under Starmer it is clear that Labour councils will not heed this call, but that will raise the question of Unite members standing themselves or backing other anti-cuts candidates.

Meanwhile BFAWU, the Bakers' Union, has disaffiliated from Labour while making clear that they are not stepping back from politics. Their general secretary, Sarah Woolley, has explained that they will back candidates who stand on a fighting programme in the interests of their members, whether they be "a Labour person, a Green or for socialist groups like the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition".

The TUSC 'umbrella'

We believe TUSC's 'umbrella' approach is well-adapted to the tasks the movement faces in fighting for working-class political representation, and trying to coalesce together all those forces who are serious about fighting for socialist policies in the electoral field.

As you may recall TUSC was set-up in 2010, co-founded amongst others by the late Bob Crow, then general secretary of the transport workers' union, the RMT (a brief history is available at

<http://www.tusc.org.uk/txt/429.pdf>). The RMT is now a component organisation of TUSC, alongside the Socialist Party and Resist. In addition there are individual executive members of several other trade unions who serve on an All-Britain Steering Committee in a personal capacity, alongside an elected representative of individual TUSC members.

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. TUSC provides us with a banner under which we can prosecute those struggles in the electoral field. Without this many of our candidates would have had no choice but to appear on the ballot paper without any description or as 'Independent', making it much harder to differentiate themselves from 'non-political' or even openly right-wing candidates. Clearly, successfully registering Beacon Liverpool with the Electoral Commission as you are seeking to do will help your future candidates to overcome this problem, but we would ask you to consider that also standing under the umbrella of TUSC would further aid you in making your socialist stance and connection to the trade union movement clear.

How TUSC functions

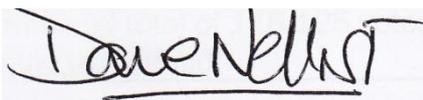
TUSC operates both at the all-Britain level and locally on the basis of consensus (the current rules can be found at <https://www.tusc.org.uk/txt/433.pdf>). This safeguard means that no component part of a TUSC committee, again both at the all-Britain level or a local group, can be 'bounced' into lending their name to an action taking place under the TUSC banner if they feel strongly about a particular matter.

Candidates wishing to use the TUSC name in local elections have to agree that, if they were elected, they would implement the TUSC core policies platform, which in turn is agreed by consensus by the All-Britain Steering Committee. But beyond that, they are free to run their election campaign in whatever way they wish, including campaigning on additional issues and prominently advertising their own party or organisation if they belong to one in anyway these choose. The current core policies for local council candidates are available at <https://www.tusc.org.uk/17485/01-03-2021/tuscs-core-policy-platform-for-the-may-2021-local-elections>.

If Beacon Liverpool was to decide to participate in TUSC you would be able to continue to develop your organisation, whilst also taking advantage of TUSC's banner and support in the trade union movement. Even if you do not want to take this step at this stage, we would still like to discuss with you about how we can maximise electoral collaboration. This is particularly important given TUSC's well-established record of standing in Merseyside.

I look forward to hearing from you.

In solidarity,



Dave Nellist

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Former Labour MP 1983-1992

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