



News from the
TUSC Individual
Members

Report from the TUSC national meeting on June 12th

By *Pete McLaren*, TUSC Individual Members' representative on the all-Britain Steering Committee

There were 115 members and supporters present at the TUSC national zoom meeting to discuss the coalition's general election plans, held on Monday June 12th.

The TUSC national chair *Dave Nellist* opened the meeting, welcoming the many new members in particular. He gave a brief history of TUSC's development out of the discussions about the need for working class political representation initiated by the RMT general secretary Bob Crow. He outlined how the highpoint was standing 135 candidates in the 2015 general election, and explained why we had not stood in any elections whilst Jeremy Corbyn led the Labour Party. He described how he saw TUSC being the means to help create a new socialist party rooted in the working class, but that needed more clout to happen, maybe from left-led trade unions. But TUSC is a plan B in case nothing else develops before the general election. He concluded by hoping local trades councils would host discussions about the need for a workers based general election challenge.

The TUSC national election agent *Clive Heemskerk* continued this theme. He outlined how the capitalist establishment had recaptured the Labour party and that, a Starmer -led Labour government was likely despite a lack of enthusiasm for it. He saw our most important task as being pushing the 'left' trade unions to help establish a new workers party and organise a list of trade union-backed candidates for the general election as a step towards that. He went on to outline attempts in a number of trade unions to discuss supporting all parties who would support and promote both trade unionism and socialist policies, including in the RMT and UNITE

Clive Heemskerk went on to outline why we needed to organise a strong general election challenge ourselves, the Plan B, and try to get the 100 candidates we needed to stand under the TUSC umbrella to gain 'fair media coverage', which would guarantee national and local media coverage. It was important we didn't select candidates yet in order to encourage local campaign groups, trade unionists, other socialist organisations and independent socialists to join with us and decide who best would represent a particular area given its circumstances. Lobbying the local MP would be part of the process of moving towards an election campaign. He suggested no other left political organisation was in a position to organise a mass election challenge. The TUSC model works, he concluded, with candidates from seven different left parties and campaign groups standing under the TUSC banner in 2015, alongside a number of independent socialists.

During the discussion that followed, *Left Unity's Principal Speaker Nick Jones* said he would be recommending that Left Unity get involved despite previous intransigence. TUSC's strategy was correct. *Gerard Tasker from OCISA* (Organise Corbyn Inspired

Socialist Alliance) also supported what he had heard about TUSC's plans, suggesting we needed unity across the left, starting with networking.

Points made in the general discussion included:

- We need to establish the TUSC name and identity in local communities. Many on the doorstep in the May elections did not know who we were.
- We need to raise national funds now to get the TUSC name known.
- We need to express the rage of our class. There is so much extreme poverty and suffering that Labour is saying little or nothing about.
- We need to raise funds: one suggestion is membership for life for £1.
- We need to bring local groups and activists together before we have a candidate in place to encourage participation.
- It is important in terms of building a new mass socialist party that we get the 100 candidates and reach the media threshold.
- We must build local TUSC structures up and down the country. It does not matter whether they are loose informal groups or steering committees/branches.
- It is vital that we involve other left and community/campaigning organisations. There is a vital need for unity on the left.
- TUSC has a workable strategy to get us somewhere. We need to keep pushing invites to other organisations.

Clive Heemskerk responded to the discussion. He began by informing the meeting a member had, in writing before the meeting, suggested we stand in the seat held by the Speaker in the House of Commons, a seat not normally contested. He was pleased so many issues had been raised. Moving forward, we needed to go to trade unions locally and start the discussion. We should stand in as many wards as possible in next May's council elections as a dry run, and also because in 2024 we will only need 340 candidates to get 'fair media coverage'. Unlike general elections, no deposits are required. If we stood 100 candidates in the general election, we would need £50,000 for those deposits and £10,000 for a media broadcast.

Dave Nellist concluded the meeting by summarising its main points. He felt the meeting had gone well, and he stressed the need for local structures, unity across the left, and achieving the media threshold by having a hundred-plus candidates. He suggested that the all-Britain steering committee hold further meetings like this.

In conclusion, this was, in my view, an excellent meeting which gave TUSC members and supporters ample opportunity to discuss how we prepare the largest socialist challenge possible in the upcoming general election. There was a very balanced debate with at least half the contributions 'from the floor' coming from independent socialists, a number of whom were not already registered individual members of TUSC.

The issues raised were discussed at the steering committee two days later and will be acted upon, with the introductory contribution to the meeting from the national agent being put on the TUSC web site. A report from that steering committee will be circulated from Tom and me in the next few days.