



Independent Labour Publications statement on the Labour leadership election

The way in which the Labour leadership election has unfolded has surprised everyone. The recruitment of tens of thousands of new members, supporters and affiliates, and the policy issues that have come to the fore, represent a sea change for the Party. These developments have generated an intense discussion about the candidates, their policies and the Party's political direction.

The debate has posed some fundamental questions about Labour's future, how it relates to the wider electorate and indeed the purpose of the Party itself. Perhaps not surprisingly, while much of the debate has been enthusiastic and passionate, it has also been heated, particularly on social media.

It is vital that the political divisions laid bare in recent months do not cause irreparable damage to the party's future. All of us in the party – candidates, MPs, members and supporters – should commit to some guiding principles based on democracy, respect, pluralism and participation that will allow us to work together whatever the outcome of the election.

Below, we set out four key principles that we believe should guide our future conduct in the Party, and we are asking for you to endorse the statement.

Acceptance of the result

There have been many flaws in the electoral process of this leadership contest and these will need to be the subject of careful review and, if necessary, reform. Despite this, the campaign has resulted in a huge increase in the electorate as new members, supporters and affiliates have joined. Moreover, all candidates and MPs who nominated candidates knew and accepted the system when the contest started. The result of the ballot should therefore be accepted as legitimate by all who have the interests of the Party at heart.

Whatever the outcome, there should be no attempt to undermine or destabilise the new leadership. Whoever becomes leader will face great challenges in rebuilding and expanding the Party's electoral support and facing the inevitable onslaught from the Tories and their supporters in the media.

The new leader must be given time to prove themselves. Not everyone will agree with everything they do or say and in a democratic Party such differences can and should be voiced. But backroom plots, threats to split or plans to depose a newly and democratically-elected leader are not acceptable.

Co-existence within Labour's broad church

It has become a cliché but is no less true for being repeated: Labour is and always has been a broad church encompassing a range of different political traditions and groups. Indeed the Party was founded by bringing together socialist organisations, such as the ILP and Fabians, with trade unions and union-backed MPs. The Party's recent past, as much as its history, has featured a range of political traditions.

It is vital that the Labour Party continues to be this broad church embracing a wide range of social democratic and socialist viewpoints. Indeed, it is precisely this that creates its potential to have broad popularity and electoral appeal, and to serve as a vehicle for social justice.

Given this diversity, there can never be total 'unity' of views within the Party nor, in the interests of democracy, should there be. Internal debate and discussion is essential to its political vibrancy, and no section of the Party has a monopoly on truth and wisdom. There



must be a genuine commitment to co-existence, to allowing our different traditions and groupings to continue to live side by side.

Pluralism, mutual respect and comradeship

A commitment to co-existence and internal Party democracy means that all members and supporters should actively support principles of pluralism, mutual respect and comradeship:

- pluralism in recognising that all of us have the right to argue our politics within the Party
- mutual respect in accepting that other people and groups have the right to hold and voice different opinions to your own
- comradeship in committing to the Party's common goals despite our differences.

For each of these to mean anything, the conduct of debates becomes very important. Inflammatory language and denouncing opponents as 'red Tories' or 'deluded Trots' will do nothing to foster a climate in which open, tolerant and democratic debate can flourish.

Democratic participation and openness

The Party faces enormous challenges in the coming years. A rampant and extreme Tory government, a hostile and toxic media that delights in nothing more than Labour defeat and division, and an electorate that is more diverse and volatile than for many decades, all pose fundamental questions about Labour's future. It's going to be tough for the Party in these unstable times.

The leadership contest has only just begun the process of finding a way to respond to these challenges. However, it has drawn into the Party people who have never had an association with a political party before, and drawn back to the Party people who had become disillusioned. The huge increase in its network of members and supporters is to be welcomed.

Labour will need to draw on and draw in these and other potential members and supporters if it is to find a way forward, to rebuild, reconnect and again to seize the political agenda. It will need the active participation of its members and supporters to renew the internal life of the Party. It will also need to be more open to people outside it, whether they are disconnected from the political process, or involved in other campaigns and movements.

We believe that these four sets of principles should provide the context within which Labour's renewal can be built:

- acceptance of the result
- co-existence within a broad church
- pluralism, mutual respect and comradeship
- democratic participation and openness.

If you agree go to: www.independentlabour.org.uk/main/2015/09/07/ilp-statement-on-the-labour-leadership-election and add your comment.

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