



RMT: REJOIN LABOUR AND FIGHT!

For the foreseeable future the Labour Party is RMT members' only chance of a government with pro-working-class policies.

It also gives us the only nationwide structure in which we can join other workers and socialists in the political fight to have those policies implemented. And it is the battlefield for effective movement against local council cuts.

If Corbyn wins a general election, or the Labour left wrests control of the party from the right, that big step forward can happen. RMT can help it to happen by affiliating to Labour and encouraging our members to join.

In last year's general election, Labour increased its number of MPs and votes with a left-wing manifesto. This brought tens of thousands of new members into the party and enthused millions by showing that there is an alternative to the various shades of Thatcherism offered by all the main parties until recently. Confidence in and willingness to fight for left wing ideas would be further boosted by news that a fighting union like the RMT has reaffiliated.

It is vital to keep Labour on its leftward course, and we stand a much better chance of doing this if we are part of the Labour Party. Advice shouted from the other side of the street is not nearly as effective as speaking, voting and fighting in the Labour Party against the right.

From the unlikely event of a left-winger being elected Labour leader has been built the hope and possibility of a better world for the majority. Who knows how long we'll have to wait for another unlikely event before we get a chance like this again.

Seize the opportunity now, support reaffiliation to the Labour Party, join it and work to make the possibility a reality!

Bakers' union leader says:

Ian Hodson, the president of the Bakers, Food, and Allied Workers' Union (BFAWU), writes:

"Influence on policy is probably the key role we can play as an affiliate. Although we only affiliate enough to send two delegates to Labour Party conference, RMT's role would be much greater. We can put forward our own motions, and recently we changed Labour policy to accept our demand for £10 per hour minimum wage.

"We also have benefited from the support we gained from our affiliation during our McStrike, with both logistic and leadership endorsement as well as assistance with the media.

"Affiliation means we can play a role in local constituencies through CLPs and in regions, where we are able to influence the selection of councillors and MPs. At regional conferences we can shape regional policies: for example, in the North West we have been able to push our stance on banning fracking.

"We work with other trade unions under the umbrella of TULO. We have direct access to MPs who we can call on to support our campaigns and our local branches. We only support MPs who support our aims, and we don't fund MPs who are seen as not pushing a trade union agenda."

What about "TUSC"?

Some comrades want RMT to stay out of Labour so it can keep backing the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

TUSC was never a viable electoral alternative to Labour. In 2017's council elections, TUSC candidates polled an average 2.2%. Over the last three years, the average has been just 2.7%.

Results aren't everything: if TUSC had made clear, class-struggle socialist demands, it would have fulfilled an educative purpose. But generally, its platform has been bland 'anti-cuts' propaganda rather than a radical socialist alternative. Now, with Labour's national leadership embracing anti-austerity, what is TUSC's role?

While the Labour Party is booming, with high attendance at local party meetings and a real political life developing, albeit slowly, at grassroots level, TUSC has very little life: few regular meetings, and little means for activists or affiliates to shape its direction except for its national steering committee, which meets infrequently.

For RMT to continue to be involved with TUSC is a dead end.

Q&A ...

Will we lose our independence if we affiliate to Labour?

No. All Labour-affiliated unions are independent organisations, with their own rulebooks, structures and policy-making procedures. The Labour Party cannot intervene into the internal democracy of its affiliates or stop them passing their own policies.

The only restriction Labour affiliation would place on RMT is that we could no longer back election candidates against the Labour Party.

What if we want to pass policies contrary to official Labour policy?

We can. Almost all unions have policies on some issues which differ from Labour Party policy. Affiliating to Labour doesn't stop us passing these policies: it lets us fight for them within Labour's structures!

RMT's membership includes people who support many different political parties. Why should their union affiliate to only one?

Affiliating to Labour won't stop individual RMT members joining or supporting other parties. Your decision whether to support reaffiliation is about whether you think it makes strategic sense for the labour movement collectively to have its own political party, and whether we can pursue that aim effectively by affiliating to the current Labour Party.

If we reaffiliate, no RMT member will be forced to join or vote Labour, and those who disagree with reaffiliation will still be free to express their view.

Can we afford it?

Yes. RMT is growing and is financially stable. The maximum cost of affiliation is around £250,000.

But this question is not really about money: it is about political strategy. If it's the right thing to do, we should do it, and find the money. In fact, the affiliation fee is not

What happens now?

RMT's 2017 AGM agreed that the union would initiate discussions with Labour at national level, seeking answers to certain questions about how reaffiliation might work, before convening a Special General Meeting (SGM) to discuss the issue.

Branches and Regional Councils can organise their own discussions. We can send copies of this broadsheet to any branches who may wish to distribute them to their members.

This broadsheet was produced by socialists active in RMT, including members of Workers' Liberty. To get in touch, email office@workersliberty.org



**“It would be great to have the RMT in the Labour Party”
— Jeremy Corbyn**

fixed. Unions must pay £3 per member they affiliate, but whether we affiliate our entire membership, or a section of it, is up to us.

Wouldn't affiliating to Labour be divisive in Scotland, where many members support the SNP?

The authors of this briefing believe that the Scottish National Party is not a working-class party, and that in government it has served the interests of business. But we know that this view is not shared by many RMT members in Scotland.

We want to continue that discussion within the union, but in the meantime there is an easy 'workaround' to prevent differences over Scottish politics becoming a roadblock to Labour reaffiliation: when the Fire Brigades Union reaffiliated to Labour after Jeremy Corbyn became leader, it affiliated only its members in England and Wales. RMT could do something similar, allowing Scottish branches to maintain some political autonomy.

If we affiliate to Labour, won't we have to support right-wing Labour MPs and right-wing Labour councils which carry out cuts?

No. We would be in a better position to fight them and their cuts.

We could not support electoral challenges to them, but we could join and initiate campaigns against them and the effects of their policies. Where unions have fought Labour council cuts, this has been led by workers in unions like Unison, Unite, and GMB – all of which are affiliated to Labour.

Moreover, affiliating to Labour would enable us to challenge right-wing MPs and councillors for selection, and putting up better, left-wing, candidates against them. Under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, the Labour left is growing in size and confidence.

It is increasingly well-placed to challenge Labour right-wingers; by reaffiliating, RMT can become directly involved in, and help shape, that struggle.