



Platform of Grass Roots Left (GRL)

Preamble

The importance of having a platform that all elected candidates of a Grass Roots Left are committed to should be obvious. The aim would be to stop the constant problem of people being elected on “left policies” and then them turning right and kicking those who elected them in the teeth: the Derek Simpson method. Accountability to the rank and file is crucial, and withdrawal of electoral support an important method of control. But far better is only electing those with a proven commitment to the rank and file of the union.

It is necessary to reject what is called the syndicalist version of the rank-and-file where a group seeks to educate, mobilise and agitate for industrial action whilst not standing for any union position at all on the basis that power always corrupts. This outlook results in a division of labour, the bureaucrat is safe in his office and the rank-and-filers mobilise the members when necessary as an adjunct to the bureaucrat, whilst bitterly criticising the corruption of the bureaucrats in their propaganda.

Of course we will critically support left candidates who are not our members and do not support our full platform on the basis of the united front tactic against the right bureaucrats. This is because such candidate talk more left, proclaim to be on the side of the workers more than the pro-boss right bureaucrats and it is necessary for the ranks to learn about these in the practice of the class struggle. For instance if Jerry Hicks was not standing in the last Unite election it would have been correct to support Len McCluskey, despite his fake leftism and hypocrisy, because whilst we may understand this well the ordinary membership do not and will not until they begin to struggle themselves in strike actions, occupations etc. So it is not a question of electing better leaders but of mobilising the ranks to fight for their own interests by defeating the bureaucratic opponents within the trade unions.

Whilst our first priority is to build a Grass Roots Left in Unite we are for such rank and file structures in all unions. We welcome as members all trade unionists committed to the rank-and-file principles like the building workers and others to facilitate the formation of rank-and-file organisations in their own unions.

The Platform

1. Members of the group must be accountable to the group and to its founding principles.
Electoral support will be withdrawn from those deemed by the group to be in breach of its founding principles.
2. Democratise the unions. All stewards, reps, branch secretaries and officers and officials of the union to be electable annually, accountable and recallable. On assuming union positions all Grassroots members to accept no more than an average skilled workers wage.
3. Members of the group who are full-time union officials (as distinct from branch officers who are volunteers) or union employees have speaking rights but no voting rights at meetings. We include in this those union officers who are on full-time secondment for union duties and paid

by the employer, like London bus company convenors.

4. Defeating the anti-union laws are a priority not least because trade union leaders increasingly use them to hide their opposition to fighting the cuts. We are for confronting anti-union laws and supporting unofficial action when necessary. Recognition and strike pay for all unofficial strikes. All out action to defend any striker prosecuted under their provisions and defiance of any fine or sanction. The slogan which reflects our orientation to the trade union bureaucracy in strike struggles is: “**with the union leaders where possible, against them where necessary**”
5. Rank and file control of the union. Elected strike committees to run disputes. Mass meetings of the membership to decide on any negotiation or settlement. No secret deals.
6. Back to the unions. For a mass unionisation drive. Draw migrant workers, casual and low paid workers in unorganised sectors into the trade unions. For strikes and occupations to win better conditions and decent pay for all.
7. No to class collaboration. No union involvement in management schemes. No faith in ACAS arbitration. For collective bargaining. Tear up “no strike” deals.
8. We are for democratising the use of the political fund of the trade unions and the relationship of the unions to the Labour party. Trade unions do not get ‘value for money’ for the millions in funding they give to Labour, mainly because trade unions leaders are quite happy at the pro-capitalist policies of Labour leaders, despite protestation. They could easily force major concessions from Labour by withholding funding. Therefore we are for only supporting Labour MPs or Councillors who support our members and our unions’ policies.
9. Cross-European rank and file organisations. Fight the multi-nationals drive to the bottom. For the free movement of labour across borders, no to all immigration controls. We don’t believe in illegality of workers – people should be free to travel the world. Money does at the touch of a button – we call it the Stock Market. International solidarity with workers everywhere and the victims of capitalist oppression.
10. For the right of all black, women, lesbian, gay, transgender and disabled worker to caucus in TUs and voice their own demands. Against any discrimination at work. Make the Equality and Diversity structures a model for genuine involvement. Ensure retired members, a prized asset, have equal rights in the union.
11. We recognise that the essential goal of all fascist movement is the destruction of the organisations of the working class. Therefore we will mobilise to no platform and to confront the fascists on all occasions and will fight to expel all fascists from the trade unions and labour movement.
12. £25 billion on green energies creating a million jobs. £25 billion on pensions. We are for scraping Trident saving £75 billion. Instead spend £25 billion on schools, hospitals, houses, providing 100,000 jobs and for saving money and lives by bringing the troops home from Afghanistan. £25 billion on green energies creating a million jobs. £25 billion on pensions.
13. For a sharply progressive wealth tax on the rich and the elimination of all the tax loopholes which enables companies like Barclays Bank to pay just 1% tax on £11.6bn profit (Guardian headline 19/2/11). Make the capitalist pay for the crisis they created, not the workers and poor.