

# Which Way For Our Trade Unions?

A discussion by the National Democratic Party



## INTRODUCTION

The Trade Union and Labour Movement has played a major part in shaping British Society. Things we take for granted were fought for, not given. They were fought against the opposition of the rich and privileged. For decades we have seen the Corporate Media and BBC constantly attack and vilify the trade unions. The vote, women's rights, the NHS, the weekend, the shorter working week, pensions, are all achievements of the trade union and labour movement. However an enormous amount has been lost since 1980 and Thatcher's imposition of neo-liberalism. Why? Simply put, the strong militancy of the trade unions in the 1970s was short sighted. The trade unions lacked an economic strategy for the UK. The unions lacked a clear alternative to the lack of investment of the 1960s and 70s. This lack of political-economic vision allowed Thatcher to seize the political initiative. It enabled the ruling classes to dismantle and offshore British industry – to degrade engineering as “metal bashing” as the media gleefully reported it. The huge power base of industrial trade unionism was destroyed, deliberately. Instead of long term state planning, what was left was privatised. A process that has crept into every aspect of our economy like a cancer. Destroying services and raising prices wherever it spread.

Vast amounts of industry were exported or closed. Our infrastructure and key industries privatised only to make vast profits for shareholders at the expense of the working classes. Our standard of living plummeted and now a working class family, even with both partners working, can barely afford to buy or rent a house. The response of the trade unions has been to turn inwards to provide services instead of leading the fight for alternative policies.

The collapse in trade union vision was highlighted by most of them supporting “Remain” during the Brexit vote. Chiefly because they wanted the EU laws to do their job for them. However, the neo-liberal EU makes it impossible for governments to re-nationalise industries, a key component of any socialist programme. It's time to change all that.

## **UNITY – RENEWAL - VISION**

More than ever before, the trade union movement needs unity. But that is not enough. It needs renewal, to become less bureaucratic and re-engage with its members. It needs to link up with the many single issue campaigns affecting the lives of working people. Above all it needs vision. The vision necessary to argue and campaign for a renewal of the UK economy. We need long term planning to re-industrialise the UK and that can only be done by a progressive government.. It is insane to leave our country's investment in the hands of US finance capital such as Blackrock.

### **VISION**

Our vision has to be long term investment in manufacturing, in science, IT, engineering, mathematics, science, communications and AI. All this needs a programme of long term planning to re-organise our education system in order to modernise the UK. We need to adopt an Alternative Economic Strategy based on firm and realistic socialist planning.

### **RENEWAL**

Our trade unions need to re-engage properly with their members. With full timers regularly calling quarterly shop floor meetings and keeping in constant contact with the shop-stewards. They should be organising and involving the workplace, not just servicing members like an insurance company, Trade Union Education and Working Class history needs to be promoted in the workplace. We need a national, inter-union shop-stewards organisation in order that knowledge can be shared. We need an end to the continuing demarcation divisions. The appalling turnouts for voting are a sign of disengagement by the members from the Unions. This makes it easy for unrepresentative organisations to capture leading positions from both the moribund right and the sectarian “leftist” groupings.

### **UNITY**

We need to campaign for greater unity in the labour movement. Clearly the Labour Party is here to stay, despite the destruction wrought by Starmer and his gang. We cannot allow this destructive clique to remain in charge of the Labour Party. What are the alternatives?

It is clear that what used to be known as the “left” has lost its way. It has been diverted and distracted from class-based issues affecting British working people to the various “identity” fads imported from the USA. This needs to change.

The National Democratic Party (NDP) calls for a campaign for Unity, Renewal and Vision within the Trade Union movement. To build its strength we should insist that any working class party has to incorporate a programme of economic renewal as central to its policies.

The NDP calls for an Alternative Economic Strategy: a long term plan for the nationalisation of all infrastructure, including energy, for public ownership and control over the finance sector and golden shares in all our major corporations to prevent the export of UK industry. **Join us today**

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