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27th February 2026

TO: ALL BRANCHES

Dear Colleagues,

SPECIAL REPORT TO CWU CONFERENCE: LABOUR PARTY RELATIONSHIP

As branches will be aware, the CWU's affiliation to Labour has been subject to an increase in scrutiny and debate in recent months, given the issues with the current Labour government.

Although the government has introduced many positive changes, including the Employment Rights Act, it is clear that there have been too many mistakes, both political and legislative. These mistakes have given rise to Reform and the real threat of a deeply anti-union government taking shape in a few years time. This is therefore a crucial time to ensure that we are able to create an effective political strategy that reaches out to our members who have become disillusioned with politics and one that can fully exert our influence on the government to ensure it is working in the true interests of working-class people.

The wider movement, including the trade union movement, must also be able to recognise where we have not been able to connect with working-class people and why we need to build a more dynamic movement that can organise across sectors, particularly in the private sector.

This is a crucial political moment for all trade unions and their members. We must rise to the challenges we are facing to build political and industrial power for working people. This can only be done if our branches and membership have a greater understanding of the strategy the union is pursuing.

Therefore, it is within this context that the NEC has submitted a Special Report to our upcoming CWU Conference to enable a wider and more informed debate about the changing UK political environment.

The purpose of the Special Report is to lay out an assessment of the current Labour government and the next steps in the CWU's continued affiliation to the Labour Party and in achieving the wider trade union movement's political goals. This includes acknowledging the need for a clear change of direction, given the failure of the current labour leadership and a comprehensive, class-focused approach to resolving the political division that has spread across our society.

Between now and the CWU Conference we are committed to engaging with branches, reps and members on the content and direction set out in this report. This will include a briefing of all CWU branches, details of which will be sent out in due course.

The SOC will be issuing an LTB later today about how branches can submit amendments to this report and further details on how the report will be debated at Conference.

If you have any further questions, please contact the General Secretary's Department at dlynch@cwu.org

Yours sincerely



Dave Ward
General Secretary

NEC Special Report to Conference- Labour Party Relationship

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The Labour government has introduced the Employment Rights Act, after nearly a decade of campaigning from trade unions. This is the biggest shift in favour of workers rights in decades and relieves trade unions of many restrictive, anti-union laws and regulations, as well as opening access to non-unionised workplaces and industries. The government has also introduced other positive measures, including the Renters Rights Act and lifting the two child benefit cap, which will genuinely change the lives of millions of people.

However, these positive changes have been overshadowed by a series of significant mistakes, political and legislative, made by the government since their election in July 2024. This includes egregious mistakes related to the appointment of the former US ambassador, indicative of a toxic culture at the heart of government which has damaged the reputation of the Labour Party across the country and eroded trust with the public.

Many of these mistakes can be traced back to the shift towards an overtly factional and dysfunctional party culture under the current leadership. For decades, the Labour Party had taken a 'broadchurch' approach to its politics but this has now been shunned, in favour of valuing loyalty at all costs. As a consequence, decent people with real solutions to Britain's problems have been pushed aside, over political loyalty.

The government has also pursued an economic strategy which has failed to tackle wealth inequality, alongside disastrous attempts at cutting vital benefits for people with disabilities and winter fuel allowances for older people. The reluctance to tackle the real causes of wealth inequality can only be attributed to the influence of big business and corporations on the government, with catastrophic electoral and economic consequences.

In their election campaign, the Labour Party promised the country change and even accepting that they inherited a difficult economic situation, there has not been significant enough change. Consequently, it has given rise to the surge in support for Nigel Farage's party, Reform.

Reform has directly appealed to the public perception of 'Broken Britain' and the widespread, justified frustration with the state of our public services, our high streets, regional inequality, the lack of opportunities for young people and the cost of living. However, instead of focusing on the significant wealth inequality and the expansion of the gig- economy, Reform have instead placed the blame on migrants, multiculturalism, women's rights, people with disabilities and LGBT+ people. Labour's inability to connect with working-class people and take real action on the economy has only fuelled their rise in the polls and the subsequent rise in extreme far-right and fascist rhetoric across the country, which divides our class. Trade union members are not exempt from this rise, with union members across different industries becoming disillusioned with Labour and turning to Reform.

Nigel Farage has a long, well-documented history of supporting free market economic policies and placing significant restrictions on trade union activity, alongside policies that restrict the rights of migrants and refugees, including those in the UK legally. Reform's political agenda does not represent working-class people in the majority but instead represents a corrosive ideology which shields the wealthiest at the top of society from blame and instead, aims to tarnish millions of working migrants as the cause of our country's demise. Yet, Reform have claimed to be the voice of working-class people. They are able to do this because of the absence of effective political communication and a genuinely transformative plan for Britain from the government- aided and abetted by the media's continuous coverage of Farage.

The trade union movement has not always been faultless in regards to building a strong movement against the far-right. Too often, internal warfare has been placed above working to organise entire sectors, leading to a significant drop in union density in the private sector. The wider movement has also drifted further away from the realities of most working people's lives, holding narrow and often punitive discussions regarding migration and the refugee crisis in an increasingly complex and difficult geopolitical climate. There is no contradiction in having a planned migration strategy that protects wages and promotes a strong national economy and also having a tolerant, diverse and richly multicultural society. We must accept that many of the institutions on the left-wing of politics have failed to communicate these ideas and have occasionally engaged in 'purity politics', leading many

working-class people feeling alienated and disconnected from the movement that should be their natural political home. This current political crisis must mark a turning point for both politicians but also trade unions, if we are to push back against the rise of the far-right.

The CWU and the trade union movement must be clear- this cannot continue. After years of wage stagnation, cumulative pressure on our public services and NHS and a breakdown of the social contract, we need a broad movement to bring about real change for working people. This is not simply about the Labour Party, though our union's campaigning on the New Deal for Workers shows the importance of trade unions being part of a coherent political project. This is about trade unions, community groups and working-class people calling for change and using all political, industrial and social levers available to us to achieve this change.

We are therefore proposing to take the following steps, in continuing our Labour affiliation:

- To call for a significant change in the direction of the Labour government, including its reorientation towards the true interests of working class people, and to use any and all necessary means to achieve this change.
- To reaffirm our 2021 policy to abstain from paying any donations to the central Labour Party, outside our affiliation fees and to only support politicians who support our members and trade unionism.
- To develop and implement a strategy to reinvigorate the wider trade union movement, both politically and industrially. This includes continuing our campaign to democratise the TUC and the wider movement and introduce new measures to support innovative trade unionism and sectoral collective bargaining, especially in the private sector. We will work extensively with other trade unions who support these aims.
- To develop and implement an anti-racist and anti-fascist strategy that truly connects with working-class people and presents a vision for the future, for all. We will work extensively with other trade unions and community groups who support these aims.