

# Response to the 2019 General Election Review contribution from Chris Hodgkins – Labour Party membership number Axxxxxx

## 1 General point about the review

I tried to find a contact address postal or email and no contact points could be found on the website: <https://www.labourtogether.uk/review> I went to undertake the questionnaire and my computer flagged up **Dangerous Web Page** Blocked and Norton gave the site an unsafe rating

I had already managed to fill the questionnaire on my mobile phone but to be perfectly honest, the questionnaire did not allow me to fully represent my views and there was a problem with the safety of the survey website. I have therefore set my views and findings down in this document which I trust will help you in your deliberations. I make no apologies for what is a frank and candid appraisal of the debacle by the Labour Party at the 2019 General Election.

## 2 The Review Team at Labour Together

There are 15 members of which 8 are women and 7 male. However there is only one BAME representative when the demographics of the general population at large should suggest there should be 2 BAME of the total of 15 members.

In terms of geographic spread it is not exactly representative. For example there is no one from the North East which I would have thought was crucial.

## 3 Strategy, vision and tactics

### 3.1 Competitive analysis and election slogans

Whoever was in charge of developing and formulating the campaign had clearly not done any strategic analysis of what they were up against. Dominic Cummings honed his skills in the 2004 North East referendum campaign the “North East Says No” who coined the slogan: “Politicians talk, we pay.” Dominic Cummings went on to run the leave campaign with the phrase “Take back control” and with the 2019 Conservative campaign “Get Brexit Done” trotted out on every available occasion and rammed home. Clearly Labour had not picked up on any of this and the Labour Party slogan “It’s time for real change.” was flaccid, incomprehensible and meaningless. It also managed to break the cardinal rule when formulating slogans or mission statements that the sentence must contain a verb which makes the sentence positive with an explicit action or actions.

### 3.2 Vision

Clem Attlee in his election broadcast on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1945 set out the vision for Labour:

“The men and women of this country who have endured great hardships in the war are asking what kind of life awaits them in peace. They seek the opportunity of leading reasonable secure and happy lives and they deserve to have. They need good homes, sufficient food, clothing and the amenities of life, employment and leisure and social provision for accident, sickness and old age. For their children they desire an educational system that will give them the chance to develop all their faculties.”  
(Purpose and Policy Selected Speeches by the Rt Hon C.R. Attlee C.H.,M.P. Hutchinson and Co 1946 p7)

Clem Attlee’s vision was straight forward, simple and direct. The Labour Party in its 2019 manifesto had twenty-two policies. None of them appeared to be prioritised and the election manifesto contained no costings and was 105 pages long. Neil Kinnock’s comment on the Labour’s manifesto and subsequent defeat in 1983 as the “Longest suicide note in history” readily springs to mind.

Labour sprayed policies as if from a fire hose. The delivery was incoherent, inchoate and utterly unfocused. It also made Labour look as if they were returning to their comfort zone of the unachievable left wing and were heading back to the bounded rationality of the past.

### 3.3 What did the electorate want?

A rhetorical question, but had the Labour Party conducted any focus groups to ascertain what potential voters wanted and their voting intentions? Albert Hirschman in his treatise *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* (1970) developed the concept that a labour voter, for example, could exit by voting for another party or they can find a voice that if listened to will keep them loyal to the Labour Party if loyalty can be engendered then exit can be mitigated. However it appears that no one listened to those voters who had voted Labour for most of their lives – especially in the then Labour strongholds of the North

and the result was a disaster for Labour. Labour was not listening and had no empathy with its heartland voters. To regain hearts and minds there needs to be a paradigm shift away from the failed policies and posturing of an era that has gone.

Labour seems to have operated under the delusion that its large membership – 485,00 as of July 2019 (House of Commons Library Friday 9<sup>th</sup> August 2019) - would assist them in winning an election. Clearly this is not the case as the Conservatives, who had 180,000 members won by a landslide.

The Labour Party needs to listen and to listen hard.

#### **4 Where are we now and where do we want to be?**

The structure of the Labour Party needs a complete overhaul. The website <https://www.labour.ie/party/structure/> has the following structure

##### **4.1 The Party Structure**

There is no organisation chart but piecing a structure together from the Labour Party website it contains the following elements:

*“From local Labour teams, right up to the National Executive Committee, Labour is a volunteer-led organisation. Explore the different teams within Labour and how we make policy”.*

- *Branch Labour Party*
- *Constituency Labour Party*
- *National Executive Committee and sub committees*
- *Local and regional Labour Policy Forums*
- *National Policy Forum*
- *Policy Commission*
- *Annual Conference*
- *The Shadow Cabinet*

Whilst Unite has this:

*“What is the national governing body of the Labour Party? The governing body of the Labour Party is the National Executive Committee (NEC). The NEC oversees the work of the Labour Party and its policy making process. It meets bi-monthly and has a number of sub-committees dealing with specific areas such as disputes or equalities. All sections of the Labour Party are represented on the NEC. Some attend because of the position they hold. Others are elected, either at Labour Party conference, or by One Member One Vote (OMOV) ballots.”*

I could not find an organisational chart anywhere that shows how the Labour Party works. The organisation needs a complete overhaul and streamlining. Furthermore the Labour Party should once and for all move to one member one vote so that power is in the hands of paid up members not affiliated parties, trade unions or Momentum.

Labour needs an organisational reformation and transformation to take it in to the 2020's and beyond

#### **5 Get the right team in place to take the Labour Party forward**

There should be an enquiry into the team that was responsible for Labours election defeat and lessons learned, with training if appropriate or a radical overhaul and a new team put in place. A failure to do this will result in history eventually repeating itself.

#### **6 Conclusions**

Tragically and regrettably the Labour Party has let down the very people it was set up to serve. If the Labour Party continues with its obsession with an ideology of the past then they will, as night follows day end up as Koestler's description of a die hard “The Swiss Guard on the staircase of the Tuilleries.”

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