



SHARON GRAHAM'S MANIFESTO

LET'S GET
BACK TO THE
WORKPLACE



PRIORITY

A Workers' Politics

I will lead a progressive Union that moves beyond internal Labour politics.

In addition to a comprehensive Industrial Programme to build a strong, powerful Union, we also need a political strategy that is focused on developing a sustainable, progressive movement. I believe that, outside of occasional tactical victories, there can be no real political progress without a living, progressive movement. The almost exclusive focus on the Labour Party has been at the expense of building organisation that can be sustained outside of the ebb and flow of Westminster cycles. The focus on 'leaders', whilst understandable, is a rabbit hole from which we have struggled to emerge.

For me, if we are to fight the worst excesses of modern capitalism, if we are to sustain a consensus and create a new political centre-ground, then we can only do this through the painstaking work of building our forces within the population at large. We simply must be more than policy proposals and demands. We have to help deliver practical support in the communities which we claim to represent. We have to find our place in people's daily lives, whether that be as a strong industrial Union or within the community. We have tried our political project within Labour – it has failed. A whole host of fronts have been set up – none has delivered power. We have waited for the 'spontaneous' struggle to emerge – it hasn't. We must now actively build from the ground up. There are no shortcuts.

I will build a movement for change

I pledge to build a real, progressive **movement for change**, rooted in the workplace and communities.



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If elected, I will:

Focus on policy not personality or faction.

- I will produce a democratically agreed **Workers' Manifesto** and use this as the spearhead for engagement with the Labour Party. I will not write blank cheques and I will expect a strong commitment to protect and promote the interests of working people.

Support only MPs or candidates for Parliament who are trade unionists.

- We will not use Unite members' money to support new candidates unless they have been a Union Shop Steward or Rep. In the first instance I will focus on supporting Unite Shop Stewards who wish to stand for office.

Oppose any Local Authority, including Labour, if they attempt to force through cuts to jobs and services after COVID-19 and beyond.

- I will support candidates who oppose cuts to Unite members' jobs and services and Councils and Councillors who fight against them.

Focus on building a movement for change.

- We will dedicate funds to build a progressive, non-sectarian platform that sits outside of electoral politics.
 - We will grow our influence within marginal seats and organise within 'left behind' areas and constituencies where the Union is strong.

In-depth: Moving beyond internal Labour politics

Q What now for the Union and Labour?

There will always be questions over the Labour link, and I am not proposing here to break it. I think that there are other, more important things to focus on. But Labour cannot expect to hide behind the label. They are there to drive the issues of working people – they need to remember that. They are supposed to be the political wing of the labour movement.

Therefore, my approach would be to reduce the emotion and focus on policy as the core of the relationship. There will be no blank cheques for any politician or political party. The democratic processes of Unite will decide upon our policy agenda, and the pursuit of the members' priorities will replace internal machinations.



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There are two other points worth mentioning here. First, I will not just hand over our members' money and the entire political fund to the Labour Party. This will not happen. Our political work needs to exist outside of Parliament and one Party, and we will need the resources to campaign politically for our members' independent of the Labour leadership. For example, this will mean putting resources into marginal seats and so-called 'left behind' areas so that we can pursue our members' priorities across the political landscape. Second, we will not actively back future candidates unless they have been Union Shop Stewards or Reps. We must learn to become self-reliant and build leaders from within our movement. Ultimately, we will support candidates whose commitment to trade unionism and Unite members is unquestionable.



**What should our political strategy be?
Why do we need to build a 'movement'?**

The Union stands at a crossroads, and so does our politics. I don't think it is unfair to suggest that, without Corbyn and following the collapse of the Left within Labour, the plan of the last five years has come to a natural end. We need to pay attention to the political reality of our situation and not get consumed by the internal war within Labour. We now need a comprehensive political strategy to rebuild a progressive, working-class politics. This would be a key element of my political work.

Often 'politics' is reduced in its entirety to Parliament and in particular to the internal machinations of the Labour Party. In reality elections are one important part of a much wider and broader picture. We have to see beyond this. First of all, I think we need to build a broad progressive platform in every part of society and, critically for the Union, in the workplace. But we also need to examine all forms of power, including those that exist outside of our immediate vision. Globalisation has delivered growing sources of power that are simply outside of the control of one state, whether that be at the level of the corporation or institutions like the WTO.

Don't get me wrong: domestic elections are important, legislation can be helpful or destructive, and as such we need to extend, not reduce, our influence in this arena. How we do this should always be up for debate.

We need a message that connects with working people in a serious way, and practical action is needed in the community and the workplace. We can no longer be absent from the lives of working people. In the public eye we have been reduced to a brief blizzard of policy proposals, not a sustainable, living movement for change.



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So, what now? First, I believe that for a progressive Left to have an identity and purpose it must be sure as to whom it represents. We must avoid the empty populism of 'between Left and Right' and the vacuous search for the 'great leader'. Instead we must consciously belong to the working class – both those engaged in traditional areas of employment and the so-called 'new' workers in the service Sector. Therefore, I believe we need to now focus on coming together and building our forces within that broad base. Our heroes should be collective.



How do we do this? We must embed a practical strategy that can help us grow power amongst the groups we seek to represent. We can operate on two fronts simultaneously. First, the workplace. As I have already said, if elected I will reform our industrial work to build our rank and file, grow the confidence of our Shop Stewards and begin to push back. I will also deliver a dedicated organising strategy to grow power and representation in all Sectors of the economy, including

the service Sector. If we are honest, despite small-scale attempts, there has been no comprehensive campaign to build fighting Unions in the 'new' areas of work. I am confident that we can deliver bargaining with any employer – we just have to be prepared to pledge resources and deliver modern, effective campaigns, including the deployment of Leverage wherever required. I would also work with other Unions to deliver a new way of working that actually incentivises Unions to grow and develop power rather than just carve out areas of influence without the promise of meaningful activity.

Second, I want us to build on our work within the community by ramping up new campaigns that will be led by the people themselves. As a Union we have already committed resources in this area, and I would remodel the way in which this is used.

But if any of this is to work, if we are to get serious and practical about building popular power, then we will need to work with others. Our forces are disparate. We need to find an approach that allows us to come together without an immediate descent into sectarianism. For that reason, I will propose that my Union works with others to establish a broad progressive platform that will deliver painstaking, practical work to organise within communities. This will be assisted by resources from the political fund.



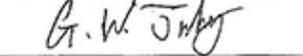
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But what would this look like? What work would it undertake? I fundamentally believe that if the Left is to become a sustainable force, that it must put the building blocks in place. In the first instance this means working with local people on practical projects in communities and doing this on a large scale. Why can't we deliver foodbanks or help find solutions for childcare if needed? Why can't we challenge housing developments and use what we have learnt in Leverage? Why can't we provide spaces for community groups that have nowhere to meet because of austerity? There is no reason why not, and surely we can all agree on this.

Through this work, leaders will identify themselves and we can start to become a living presence in peoples' everyday lives—a real movement. Progressive politics can grow and working people can begin to truly identify with the Left. For me building a sustainable base through practical work that impacts directly on people's lives is more of a priority than electoral pacts, new parties or re-organising the Labour Left—all things which would lead to inevitable splits and further acrimony. Fundamentally, if there is no base from which to grow and with which ordinary working people can identify, then we will never be able to sustain any form of political power. Now is the time to build.

These candidates say, "veto the NHS from TTIP"		
	C LIVE GREGORY	
	Mark Reckless	
	NAUSHABAH KHAN	
	GEOFF JUBY	
	Kelly Tolhurst	Not signed

									
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