

## A proposal for a Labour Party members' fraction

*This proposal was agreed at the September 2019 rs21 members' national meeting.*

The purpose of this document is to suggest that rs21 members who have joined Labour come together as a fraction.

It may be worth recapping what we mean by a fraction. It's the term used - certainly by the Bolsheviks, perhaps earlier - to describe a grouping within a revolutionary organisation that conducts co-ordinated work in a particular area, typically within the institutions of the wider labour movement or an industrial (in the broadest sense) sector. We have a number of fractions already, principally around industrial work, eg the Unite union fraction and the education workers fraction.

The vast majority of rs21 members are not in the Labour Party (current records suggest 10-20 are LP members). A number of comrades joined during the 'insurgent' phase of Corbyn's leadership and subsequently moved away from rs21. Not all comrades that joined will be participating in Labour Party activity.

Comrades joined on an individual basis for a variety of reasons and contrary to many well-argued objections. A frustration with the revolutionary left's failure to grow since the 2008 financial crisis, the desire to participate in a revival (not to overstate the case) of socialist politics and the potential for overturning several decades of neoliberal policy are all drivers. Against this, the problems of principal associated with membership of a party which seeks to govern a capitalist nation state, the limited nature of Corbyn's programme and perhaps most fundamentally the difference between 'socialism from below' - the movement of the working class based on a growing confidence in and assertion of its power - and social democracy have all been cited.

I don't plan on revisiting this discussion here. What I believe is immediately important is that these circumstances have meant that those of us that joined Labour have in general failed to share our experiences in a systematic way with either each other or the organisation as a whole. We haven't identified what arguments we should try to push within Labour Party organisations, or drawn on our experiences to develop rs21's analysis of reformism, for example.

Some informal attempts have been made to encourage Labour Party members to come together to collectively address these questions, but they haven't been successful. Fractions have a clear purpose and relationship to the organisation, and having this clarity might focus comrades on the tasks at hand. I expect that the fraction would set itself fairly modest objectives. But it seems to me that at this point, when Corbyn's Labour seems so close to office yet in such compromised and unprecedented circumstances, that we should make this effort.