

Motion to close the Labour Party fraction (rs21 Steering Group)

Agreed at the April 2021 rs21 members' national meeting

Jeremy Corbyn became Labour leader in 2015 after years when the idea of the Labour Party as a path to radical change had declined, along with Labour's support in the unions. Corbyn inspired hundreds of thousands to join the Labour Party and Corbynism became the central feature of left politics for several years.

Revolutionaries always need to organise independently from other forces, and to work with them where possible, to build powerful united action and to win workers away from other political currents. rs21 members have always worked with Labour members in a wide range of contexts. During the Corbyn era a significant minority of rs21 members joined the Labour Party, and a number of Labour Party members joined rs21.

At the National Meeting in September 2019, shortly before the General Election, rs21 passed a [motion](#) to establish a fraction of Labour Party members in order to share experiences in a systematic way, identify key arguments to make within Labour and develop our analysis of reformism.

After the General Election a [survey of rs21 members](#) showed that most members had played an active part in the election campaign, with a sizable minority putting in huge amounts of work. 24% of those who responded were Labour Party members, some of whom were consistently involved in the Labour Party outside the election.

In February 2020 (before Starmer was elected leader), the rs21 members' national meeting passed another [motion](#) about Labour. It highlighted risks of Labour members responding in two ways: *'first, by accommodating over issues such as Palestine so as to stay in the party, or second, leaving, or being expelled, and becoming inactive and demoralised. Instead, we want as many of these people as possible to remain politically active and part of socialist networks'*. The motion advised rs21 members in the Labour Party to consider their strategy, work out their red lines for leaving Labour, identify what political activity they could do outside Labour, and discuss these issues with Labour members outside rs21 'with a view to remaining in contact with them, and if possible politically active with them'. Although we haven't discussed the Labour Party at a National Meeting since then, we have published articles including '[Time to leave Labour](#)' and '[Leave Labour with a plan](#)' as well as various articles in internal bulletins.

Starmer is leading Labour decisively to the right on almost all issues. Many leftists have left Labour, while organised factions like Momentum or the circles around the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs have dug in their heels around some variation of a 'stay and fight' position, which we consider to be a dead end. In the absence of an upsurge of struggle there is no prospect of the Labour left winning the Labour leadership again, or of taking control of the undemocratic Labour apparatus. Those leftists who have remained inside Labour are finding their energies absorbed by defensive internal battles and they are increasingly unable to speak freely. Though we haven't done a new survey, it appears that most of the rs21 members who were in the Labour Party have now left. A significant proportion of those who joined rs21 since Corbyn's defeat had previously been active in Labour and recognised that the window of opportunity around Corbynism had closed.

For revolutionaries in Britain today, whilst we should show solidarity with the Labour left in many of their struggles against the Labour right and maintain close working relationships wherever we can, active involvement within the Labour Party is a distraction, particularly when there are plenty of opportunities to

work with others, for example around the public health, economic and social impact of the coronavirus; the feminist movement; housing; climate; and some important strikes. Comrades need to be able to speak freely on all these issues and more. Comrades continuing to be Labour Party members sends a misleading message to those we work with about our view of the Labour Party.

The Labour Party fraction was set up too late and had barely established itself before the situation it sought to address had gone. It has not met for a long time and its WhatsApp group is not acting as a space for comrades to discuss how we act as revolutionaries in relation to the Labour Party. For example, there has not been any discussion of how the fraction could further the Zero Covid campaign within CLPs or other Labour forums.

Given that comrades are not attempting to act collectively as revolutionaries in the Labour Party, it is no longer appropriate to have a Labour Party fraction. Discussions about the Labour Party, reformism (or other debates relating to Labour e.g. around antisemitism and Palestine) should not be confined to the Labour Party fraction because they are relevant to all members.

We therefore resolve to:

- Hold a members' call to discuss the experience and lessons of the fraction
- Wind up the rs21 Labour Party fraction
- Close its WhatsApp group to further messages so that discussions do not get siloed there
- Encourage more discussion and writing on the Labour Party and reformism, and wider questions of revolutionary strategy and tactics

We understand that some comrades remain members of Labour, however, we believe that continued membership is a distraction from our wider strategy and would urge members to leave the Labour Party.