

Committee on Standards in Public Life

Opening Statement of Byron Taylor, National TULO Officer

1. My name is Byron Taylor. I am the National Officer of the Trade Union & Labour Party Liaison Organisation (know as TULO), a position I have held since 2002.

Trade Union & Labour Party Liaison Organisation (TULO)

2. There are 28 trade unions registered with the Certification Officer that maintain political funds. Of those 28, 14 affiliate to the Labour Party. TULO exists to co-ordinate the activities of the 14 affiliated trade unions, and to represent the views of the affiliated unions within the Party.
3. TULO has been concerned about the issue of party funding since 2003 and has acted as the formal representative on of the affiliated trade unions in previous inquiries, including the 2003-2004 Electoral Commission inquiry, and & the 2006 - 2007 Hayden Philips review.
4. Professor Keith Ewing has advised and acted on behalf of TULO in the field of Party Funding since 2003. As such he is integral to our representation on these matters.

Trade union political funds

5. Trade Union political activity is regulated by no less than three separate yet overlapping Acts of Parliament. These include the *Representation of the People Act 1983*; the *Trade Union & Labour Relations (Consolidated) Act 1992*, and the *Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000*. It is my intention to briefly explain the operation of union political funds and the processes of affiliation.
6. Trade unions have been regulated for longer than any other participant in the political process. This regulation applies to political objects which are defined in the 1992 Act to include (i) trade union support for a political party (whether by affiliation or otherwise), and (ii) trade union participation in election campaigns in support of or in opposition to a political party
7. In order to constitute a political fund, a union must secure the collective approval of its membership in an all-member ballot. Once that collective approval has been secured, the union must seek authority to maintain that political fund every ten years through the mechanism of an all member postal ballot.
8. Trade unions with political objects are required by law to have political fund rules. The political fund rules must be approved by the government-appointed Certification Officer for Trade Unions and Employers' Associations. The political fund rules must provide that any member of the union may claim exemption from the obligation to contribute to the political fund, and must not suffer disability or disadvantage for doing so.

Trade unions and the Labour Party

- 9 Trade unions are an integral part of the Labour Party, and TULO is concerned about recent proposals for party funding reform that would not only introduce even further regulation of trade union political activities, but would also serve to undermine the relationship between trade unions and the Labour Party.
- 10 It is well known that trade unions founded the Labour Party in 1900. To this day, the Labour Party constitution bears the hallmark of its foundation: uniquely amongst British political parties the Labour Party is an association of individuals and organisations, which include trade unions and socialist societies.
11. As an integral part of the Labour party, trade unions have certain rights under the rules and constitution of the Party. Trade unions are represented at Conference, on the NEC, on the National Policy Forum; and trade union members participate in the electoral college for the election of Party Leader.
- 12 The current regulation of political parties respects the diversity of party organisation and structure that operates in this country. TULO believes that any further reform of the existing law should continue to respect these different traditions and that it is not for the State to dictate how political parties should be organised.