

EMILY FOR LABOUR

FIGHTING BACK TOGETHER

Dear Comrades,

I'm sorry to be late with my responses to your questions, but the Unite hustings on Friday combined with a rush to get to Yorkshire delayed me.

Now that the other three candidates have secured the required backing to get on the final ballot, I hope you will consider giving me your support to ensure we have the broadest debate possible, and that I can bring my experience on CWU issues – as the MP responsible for Mount Pleasant – to that debate.

I hope my answers to your questions below will show what I have to contribute.

1. Policy

- *Are you committed to the direction on Labour's 2017 and 2019 manifestos – are there any specific manifesto policies which you would want to change or amend?*

I'm certainly committed to the direction of both manifestos, and there are barely any individual policies I disagree with, although one of the few I argued against – unsuccessfully – was for a £400 million increase in funding for the Foreign Office, because I couldn't see how that was a bigger priority than spending on our domestic public services.

However, that for me was an example of how our 2019 manifesto became over-cluttered with promises, especially on the spending sides, and that not only made it difficult to explain on the doorstep what our priorities were, it also cost us in terms of credibility – voters just didn't believe we could deliver everything.

- *Do you support the renationalisation of Royal Mail?*

Yes – 100 per cent. Everything the CWU and those of us in Parliament supporting you has proven correct. Royal Mail is being abysmally run by Rico Back, when he's even in the country to run it, and everything is about shareholder profits and directors' remuneration, not about service to the public and fair treatment of the Royal Mail workforce.

And we all know what he ultimately wants to do: hive off Royal Mail's loss-making universal service obligation functions from its profit-making parcel delivery and business services, then go back to Ofcom, and argue that the universal service is unsustainable as a business, paving the way for an end to the universal service and massive redundancies on that side of the work?

We can't let that happen, which is why renationalisation is essential.

- *Do you support the introduction of a publicly owned national post bank?*

I think this goes hand-in-hand with the question above, because if we do renationalise the Royal Mail, we need to continue the transformation of our Post Office network into genuine public utilities and community hubs, providing a range of services, including affordable banking. So yes, CWU's campaign for a national post bank would definitely be one of my priorities.

- *What are your views on a Labour Party strategy to support our members in the telecoms and financial services industries, including the policy of universal broadband and renationalisation of relevant parts of BT?*

I'm in favour of both policies in principle and I backed them at this election, but this is a fast-moving area, so we'll need to assess where we are next time round in terms of where the remaining gaps in broadband provision are, and how the market has developed in terms of the costs facing customers.

I'm sorry not to be more definitive than that, but this is one area where I'd need to sit down with you and your members before we draw up the manifesto, and discuss whether and how the picture has changed. If it hasn't, we stick with the policy. If it has, we adapt it accordingly.

- *Are you committed to repealing the existing Trade Union Act and how would you support Trade Union organisation and values being reasserted across the world of work?*

As someone who represented striking miners, printworkers and seafarers in court in the 1980s, I know what it's like dealing with the draconian restrictions on Trade Union activity and organisation, and how those laws can be misused, so I absolutely agree we need to review and reform the existing legislation.

However, my fear is that – by then – we will be dealing with an entirely new set of restrictions on workers' rights and union activities, and relaxations on working conditions, once Boris Johnson gets past Brexit, and wants to pick a new Thatcherite fight, just like he always did with the tube workers as London Mayor.

So we're going to need an experienced, battle-hardened street-fighter to take him on in Parliament and the TV studios when he goes down that path, and as the woman who went toe-to-toe with him for the entire two years he was Foreign Secretary, and beat him every time, I'm the woman to do it.

- *Given the passing of the withdrawal agreement, how will you respond to the ongoing Brexit negotiations?*

Well, despite the passage of the withdrawal agreement, and whether Big Ben bongs on Jan 31st or not, Brexit is far from done.

Boris Johnson has no idea how he's going to negotiate a trade deal with the EU, and the EU don't know either, so my fear is we will get about half way through the year, and we will again be faced with the prospect of crashing out of the EU

at the end of 2020 without any future trade deal, with all the consequences that will have for jobs, the economy, and public services.

So from day one, we will need a new Labour leader fighting against that prospect, and demanding that Johnson takes this seriously, because in my experience of facing him, I just don't think he'll care.

- *What would your top 3 priorities be if you were elected as Leader?*

That's a tough question to answer because there's so much we need to do, but if I had to boil it down to three headings, I'd say the following.

First, we need to sort ourselves out internally: stop the division and factionalism; root out anti-semitism and end that as an issue; rebuild our campaigning machine; and target our party's financial resources more effectively.

Second, we need to fight back against the Tories in Parliament on the doorstep, and providing an effective opposition to Boris Johnson, the way I did when he was Foreign Secretary, because otherwise he'll think he can do what he likes.

Third, we need to build on the 2017 and 2019 manifestos by developing a policy offer for the public that is simple, credible, easy to sell, and transformative for our society, especially in our towns and smaller cities, our regions and devolved nations, the places where the next election will be won and lost.

2. Media and Engagement

- *How would you improve the overall communications of the Labour Party?*

Frankly, I'd manage it the same way I manage my own communications: I'm up for any challenge – from Piers Morgan to Pink News. I always talk honestly and from the heart, with a clear message to get across. And I do that across all channels: print, broadcast, blogs, podcasts, and social media.

And crucially, I don't let anyone else talk for me: I don't allow 'source' quotes; I never do briefing about private meetings or leak anything; and on the five occasions I stood in for Jeremy at PMQs, I told my team to get straight out of the press lobby afterwards, not stand there holding court for an hour.

Because it was so frustrating for me when I'd see Jeremy do a really good job at PMQs talking about the NHS or child poverty, but the story afterwards would be something his spokesman had said about Syria or Venezuela.

And the time that really damaged us was after Salisbury, when Jeremy made a sensible statement in the Commons, but his spokesman went out afterwards and said the Salisbury allegations were the same as the Iraq dodgy dossier. And that gave the media licence to accuse Jeremy of being on Russia's side.

We've got to get rid of that culture, and my fear is that there's one outcome of this contest which won't just reinforce that culture, but leave exactly the same individuals in charge of our communications.

- *How would you use the media to convince the electorate Labour is ready to govern at the next election?*

Well, I think it's simple in some ways. First, we need to simplify our message – boiling it down to five pledgecard-style priorities that will make a real difference to communities across our country. And second, we need to get out and sell it on every media outlet that those communities are watching or reading, not least local papers and regional TV, which are the most trusted sources of news.

But there's a third important thing, which I say all the time: think how many days over the last four years when the top Labour story that people are reading about relates to divisions in our party, or rows over anti-semitism, or how we've responded to issues like Salisbury. We need to cut all that out.

Every single day, we just need to say: what's our attack on the Tories; and what's our positive message about what we'd do differently. And we need to be totally unified as a party in doing that.

- *How would you increase our influence with the mainstream media?*

The simple truth is we need to get out there more in terms of appearing on the media, and work harder to engage with editors and producers behind the scenes to have honest conversations about how they're covering Labour issues.

I do both of those things constantly. I've lost count of the times I've appeared on an outlet like Talk Radio, and they say to me: you know you're the only member of the Shadow Cabinet we can get on.

And I get the same when I sit down with what we'd all consider to be right-wing newspaper editors, and I give them both barrels about their coverage, but they come out saying: 'OK, we'll think about that.'

That's just how it works. If you don't engage, then you can't persuade. And that applies to the the public and to all our mainstream media outlets.

- *Would you work to grow a new media in the UK?*

I am open to the growth of a new media in the UK, having seen how new media outlets have helped reinvigorate debate, and energise our activists. It is important that we have a range of voices in the media, and more important that we can get those voices out there on our own terms.

However, it's important that this media reaches out to the people who need a Labour government most, and not just an echo chamber of people who already agree with each other. Over the next 5 years, we must not waste time getting

bogged down in internal divisions and rows, when we must be taking on the Tories and holding Boris Johnson to account.

And it's also important that we don't turn our backs on the traditional, mainstream media which is consumed by so many people across the country.

So I'm all for new media outlets and new ways of communicating with the public, but that needs to be what we're doing, not just talking to ourselves.

- *Would you implement a dynamic and engaging social media strategy and what steps would you take to achieve this?*

I think we have great social media outputs already, and I'd want to keep on board the staff who are responsible for that, because I think it's essential for reaching wider and younger audiences. However, we still have so much to learn. Momentum, for example, have been a great asset to the party during elections. I would be keen to work closer with them on social media strategy, bringing them in-house so that we can work together and learn from one another.

There is one other thing I'd change. We have great MPs and great Shadow Ministers who do tremendous work in Parliament each day holding the government to account, and I'd want some dedicated resources put into getting their efforts online, rather than those resources mostly being used to promote the Leader of the Party. I think that would help to unify our party and show what a strong group of MPs and Shadow Ministers we have.

3. The Party

What sort of internal strategy would you pursue regarding the democratisation of the Labour Party? Including:

- *How would you make local CLP meetings more dynamic?*

My CLP meetings are already pretty dynamic! But I think one thing that would improve the debate in CLP meetings across the country is that when they decide each month what national or international issue they want to discuss, the relevant shadow minister's office is tasked with providing them a report on our position as the basis for their discussion.

Sometimes those discussions only happen when our CLPs are debating potential conference motions, but frankly I think they should be happening all year round, and we should establish more of that regular, direct conversation between our CLPs and the shadow ministers responsible.

- *How would you involve members and trade unions more?*

As I've said, I think the particular issue we face at the next election is how we can win back those seats we lost in the towns, smaller cities and suburban areas, as well as in Scotland and Wales, and then gain the extra seats we need to win in those regions and nations to take power.

And we can't form the policies to do that in some backroom in Westminster. We need to get out and sit down with the members, the activists, the candidates, and the regional trade union branches in those areas, and ask them to tell us what policies will make a difference in their seat, and will work on the doorstep.

- *What would your approach to annual conference be?*

As a conference veteran, I have to admit that I hugely enjoy going to conference. It has a vital policy making role, and is almost like one huge family party, and an opportunity for members to meet their Labour colleagues and friends. However, it's a shame we just go back and forth between Brighton and Liverpool nowadays, rather than getting out around the country more, including in areas we need to win back, but I appreciate there are financial and logistical reasons for that.

Just on a practical level, I sometimes wonder if we should have the compositing debates a few days before conference, so we come there with the proposed motions already agreed, because those compositing meetings can take a very long time and they often clash with the other fringe events and debates that members want to attend, so perhaps that's something to look at.

- *How would you encourage more working class candidates rooted in their communities to stand for parliament?*

I can only speak from my own experience, and I know my mum had to be asked to stand as a councillor, I had to be asked to stand as an MP, and I know so many women – and men – need that encouragement and persuasion to stand.

So wherever I go in the country, when I hear local people, public sector workers, or Labour activists talking in incredibly powerful terms about how things need to change in their community, I make a point of talking to them and asking if they'll consider standing for the local council or for Parliament.

And I always get a range of responses, whether it's not wanting media scrutiny or a sense of intimidation about the idea of speaking in Parliament, but the one that stands out for me above all is lots of people just can't afford to give up their jobs and devote themselves to the campaigning you need to do.

And I think that's the most practical thing we need to address: how do we do what EMILY's List has done in the US: go out talent-spotting among working-class candidates, and then give them the seed funding they need to progress.

We must ensure that our candidates have proper training, and access to Parliament and their future Labour colleagues. We must demystify Parliament, and share the lesson that every good parliamentarian knows: that what it takes to be a good MP is to be a brave and bold voice for your community.