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Dear Dave,

Thank you for writing to me about the Labour leadership election. I also want to thank you and all CWU members for everything you do to support the Labour Party and the labour and trade union movement.

Following the election result it's more important than ever that we work together to take on the Tories and to oppose their agenda of privatisation and deregulation. Johnson has already shown his true colours by watering down commitments on workers' rights in his Brexit legislation and threatening the right to strike. I have no doubt that trade union rights – already among some of the weakest in Europe – will be next in his sights.

As you will know from our discussions over recent years, I passionately believe that public services should be in public hands, not making profits for private shareholders. That of course includes Royal Mail. If elected leader I also want to ensure that trade unions stand shoulder to shoulder with the Party and are far more involved in policy and campaigning all year round.

In response to the questions posed in your letter:

## **1. Policy**

There can be no going back from the radical agenda that underpinned our 2017 and 2019 manifestos. We are a party that opposes austerity, supports common ownership and believes public services belong in public hands. Those are our core socialist values and must be the foundation on which we build a radical agenda for the 2020s and 2030s.

There were many great ideas in the 2019 manifesto — and we need to be clear that we did not lose the election because we promised to boost public sector pay, restore collective bargaining, give workers a real say in their workplaces, invest in our public services or end outsourcing to the private sector. Nor did we lose because we promised to repeal the malicious 2016 Trade Union Act and its unfair thresholds on ballots for industrial action. The 2019 manifesto could have been more focused, but it should not have been less radical.

I have always believed that Royal Mail should be in public hands, not making profits for private shareholders. The undervaluing and rushed sell-off of Royal Mail cost the taxpayer millions and left us with a more fragmented and less effective service for businesses and working people. That's why I was proud to stand on manifestos in 2017 and 2019 that would have reversed privatisation.

I also support the creation of a publicly owned retail and small business bank (i.e. Post Bank) complementing the Post Office's existing network. Bank branch closures have hit local communities hard and a retail network established in the public interest would guarantee access to banking services for everyone in the UK and in particular for small businesses. This is another reason to fight against the post office network shrinking any further, so that we can implement our Post Bank plans in government.

Labour was right to seek to address the current failure of the free market to provide cheap and reliable broadband for all – in particular for those living in rural areas. For a decade Conservative and Lib Dem governments

have put faith in the market to resolve this, but it's clear that this has not happened. Many working people and small businesses have suffered as a result. Labour must now hold the Government to account on this and highlight the impact that poor broadband access has on local communities and the economy.

I absolutely agree the Trade Union Act should be repealed. This is a pernicious piece of anti-worker legislation designed to deliberately frustrate the right to strike. The High Court injunction against the Royal Mail strike last November is a prime example of why workers need stronger legal protections against employers out to stop industrial action at any cost.

But I also want to go much further to strengthen the voice of workers and their unions. For example I believe we should do much more to promote worker representation on boards, employee ownership schemes and co-operatives. By introducing sectoral collective bargaining, we can also make long overdue progress towards fairer deals on pay, bringing an end to the low wage, insecure work which is holding back our economy and our workforce.

You will know from our many conversations on Brexit that I have always sought to bring the labour and trade movement together on this and to pursue an approach that protects jobs, living standards and workers' rights. We will be leaving the EU at the end of this month and the Remain/Leave argument will go with it. The issue of Europe has torn the Conservatives apart for 40 years, we cannot now allow it to do the same to Labour. We need to move on and ensure that our focus is on defending working people from Johnson's deregulation agenda and trade deals with Donald Trump.

My priority as Leader would be to unite the party around our radical policy agenda and to set about rebuilding public trust. That is a huge task, and it will need all parts of the party to come together.

## **2. Media and Engagement**

There is no doubt we face a hostile media. The attacks on Jeremy Corbyn over these past four years have been horrendous. The media vilified him. It happens to every Labour leader because there are undoubtedly vested interests within the media that do not want to see Labour in government.

If we are to rebuild public trust and regain the seats we need to deliver a radical Labour Government, we need to do much more to improve our comms and media strategy. That starts with using the frontbench team to take to the airwaves day-in, day-out, to make the case for Labour.

We need to have a professional modern media operation. That should start with a strategic approach to our communications, with targeted interventions that are planned and executed effectively. This requires collaboration between the Party's headquarters, shadow cabinet and trade unions.

We must not be afraid to call the media out either for misreporting or misleading the public. The press team should always be tasked with rapidly rebutting inaccurate reporting.

The Labour Party is now one of the most effective and innovative digital campaigners. I would fully support the party implementing a dynamic and engaging social media strategy and I would want to continue to build our support with new media. Crucially, I would want to see a strategy and digital team that is fully integrated with the party's campaigns and elections team. The task is clear: how can we translate digital campaigning into votes.

I welcome the growth and diversity of new media covering politics. I will make sure that our media strategy extends to ensuring we take this seriously.

### **3. The Party**

I'm proud that Labour is now the largest - and most dynamic - political party in Western Europe. I want to build on that and to make the party more democratic and more welcoming to all.

That doesn't mean shutting down debate, or losing our radicalism. Quite the contrary. We need to encourage pluralism and debate across the movement - and set our ambitions to be an even bigger party. I would work shoulder to shoulder with the trade union movement on this and include all unions much more closely in the campaign and policy making process.

I also want to ensure that people from all backgrounds are able to stand as Labour candidates and representatives. The trade union movement has always been vital in supporting working class candidates and I would want to work with unions and every part of the movement to encourage this and to break down the barriers that hold people back.

I hope this helps set out the approach I would take if elected Leader, and I hope we will have the opportunity to discuss this further.

I would be honoured if the CWU felt able to support me in my bid to become leader of the Labour Party, but I assure you that whether I succeed or not, I will always stand by you and support you and your members.

Best wishes,



**Keir Starmer**