

FABIAN REVIEW

The quarterly magazine of the Fabian Society

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COMING UP ROSES?



Labour and the 'new normal': Andrew Roe-Crines, Tracey Warren, Jill Rutter and more **p10**
Keir Starmer MP answers our questions **p16** / *Emily Thornberry MP on post-Brexit plans* **p26**

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FABIAN REVIEW

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**FABIAN
SOCIETY**

FABIAN REVIEW

Fabian Review is the quarterly journal of the Fabian Society. Like all publications of the Fabian Society, it represents not the collective view of the society, but only the views of the individual writers. The responsibility of the society is limited to approving its publications as worthy of consideration within the Labour movement.

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High impact

Labour cannot go into the next election with wild spending promises. It needs to offer ambitious but low-cost social democracy, writes *Andrew Harrop*

THINK TANKS LIKE the Fabian Society spend our days coming up with new ways for governments to spend money. Over the summer we proposed a long-term roadmap for rebuilding social security that would slash poverty. It came with a price tag in the tens of billions.

Right now, however, Labour cannot sign up to any fresh plans for big, permanent spending increases because we are about to see the highest tax rises in two generations. The revenue hike of £40bn announced by Boris Johnson to start taking effect in six months' time is almost as much as Jeremy Corbyn proposed in 2017 for the whole of a parliament.

After raising taxes so much, the electorate is entitled to expect results and there is good reason to doubt the Tories can deliver on NHS backlogs, schools catch-up or better social care. Before Labour promises any more, it must hold the government to account to ensure this extra money is well spent.

When the next election comes there is unlikely to be much appetite for further tax rises to pay for spending. Genuinely time-limited measures and capital spending can be funded by borrowing. But permanent increases in day-to-day expenditure will only be possible to the extent that Labour has credible plans to grow revenues which do not increase the tax burden of ordinary wage-earners and pensioners.

That means Labour will have to prioritise ruthlessly when it comes to making firm spending commitments. Other ideas for expenditure will have to become long-term ambitions that are contingent on how the economy performs, including most of what needs to be done to fight poverty.

The party will not be able to repeat recent activist-friendly promises like free higher education or personal care. Every spending promise will need to yield maximum results with respect to both social justice and reconnecting with voters. The first billions the party pledges should go to childcare, parental leave and universal credit for

working households, to prove that Labour is the party of family and work.

Keir Starmer's Labour party also needs to consider how to set the country on a new direction without spending money. It needs to be radical in thinking how to reshape the state in ways that do not need cash. For example, it is time to rethink education to reflect the lives young people will lead over this century: what we teach, when and how we assess, and the pathways students take. And we need foolproof plans for devolving power and money in ways that push local public services to spend across silos, embrace technology and prioritise prevention.

Beyond the state, there is the question of how Labour thinks about shaping and regulating the market and society. The pandemic has proven that the biggest dividing line between Labour and Conservative is not now on public spending but on the parties' appetite to intervene.

At least on questions of public health, Labour's instinct towards activism is closer to the public's. So the party must up its ambitions for reshaping markets and individual behaviours to make Britain fairer, greener, healthier and more prosperous. The party has already made a start by announcing important new workplace rights.

It needs to think more about regulation, but also about new partnerships with businesses, trade unions and non-profits to advance shared goals like sustainability or skills; and about the place of new public institutions that challenge or augment the private sector on green infrastructure, housebuilding or finance.

These non-spending ambitions need to be big, with sufficient scale to bring deep change to our lives. In the Corbyn years, small-scale initiatives in municipal socialism and grassroots mutualism were championed, but it was unclear how they could ever change our economy or society at large.

Now, under Keir Starmer, Labour needs a low-cost social democracy, where the rhetoric is less radical and business is treated as a partner, but where the scale of action, ambition and change is greater than ever before. ■

Shortcuts



AGAINST THE CLOCK

A lack of climate leadership is failing future generations

—Anna McMorris MP

Scientists have issued the starkest warning yet. A long-awaited landmark report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has said that the world is heading for widespread devastation unless emissions are brought down sharply.

Weather disasters in the UK and around the world this summer should already be enough of an alarming wake-up call. The series of extreme weather events, from wildfires in Turkey and even Siberia, heatwaves in the United States to deadly floods that swept through Germany and Belgium, are all caused by climate change. But are these scientists' warnings and the extreme weather events we have seen spurring world leaders, and our prime minister, to take the action that is needed?

There is certainly a growing sense of urgency coming from governments but not at the level we need and not coordinated across the globe. We are running out of time if we are to get anywhere close to meeting the challenge we face.

Scientists are telling us that there are things we can do to get ahead. Emissions from power plants, transport, housing and industry must be significantly reduced over the next decade if we are to prevent the earth's catastrophic temperature rise. And this year of the COP26 climate conference is when we must start to see that meaningful action take place. We cannot afford to fall short.

The UK government has a particular role to play as hosts in demonstrating serious leadership and action. Under the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement, nearly 190 countries committed to limiting global warming to under 3 degrees with 1.5 degrees being the ambition. The world is now looking to the UK to negotiate and broker a serious deal that means those 190 countries meet

that commitment. Yet despite the rhetoric, there has been little action. China and India have yet to publish their climate plans. Worst still, we have seen the UK government undermine vital progress: slashing development aid and hampering projects for the most climate-vulnerable communities and continuing to pump billions of taxpayers' money into dirty fossil fuel projects, all despite Labour's calls to halt these investments and end the delay on real climate action.

The outlook is not good. The prime minister's spokesperson for COP recently sneered at taking serious action, rejecting the transition to electric cars and saying the government's 2050 net zero target was too far off, telling us not to rinse our dishes and freeze bread. Flippancy at best but an attitude that fails to take this threat seriously. There need to be some tough choices and bold steps if we are to address this climate challenge. Labour, like Joe Biden, has a serious ambition, proposing a £30bn investment into a green recovery to create a thriving low carbon economy, new jobs and skills. Our next steps need not cost our future; instead they can provide the opportunities we need, and we must seize them for the good of this planet.

It is sadly inevitable that those who contributed least to climate change experience the heaviest burden. We have a duty to put this right. Not only to help those most impacted but to help us here at home too. The interconnected nature of our world means that action on climate overseas will deliver greater security at home. Having supported families through devastating floods in my constituency of Cardiff North as well as seeing first-hand the brutal impact of severe drought across East Africa, it is clear that if we are to make a difference, we must take action to support developing nations through this crisis.

To do this we need a new finance deal for developing nations so that they are able to take the decisions and action needed to help themselves. Second, they need a seat at the top table to give a voice to those suffering within their communities. Finally, there needs to be a commitment from the global nations that we must set our sights on achieving the more ambitious 1.5 degrees target limit. There is still time to see these ambitious actions at COP. But it remains to be seen whether Johnson can deliver.

The world's eyes are on us. Do we continue down this path of rising emissions, missed targets and locking ourselves into a fossil fuel era with devastating consequences, or do we ensure that COP26 is the watershed moment to get a grip, drive global ambition and ensure a safe and secure future for our future generations?

Our children and grandchildren will ultimately judge us in how far we rise to the scale of the climate crisis. Failure to deliver now fails us all. Time is running out. **F**

Anna McMorris is the Labour MP for Cardiff North, vice chair of the all-party parliamentary group on net zero and shadow minister for victims and youth justice



THE THREE HIJABIS

We all have a role to play in tackling racism—Amna Abdullatif

'Three hijabis walked into a bar' were the first words of a viral tweet that led to a movement that inspired more than 1.2 million people.

It all began during the European football championships, when I and two fellow Fabian women, Shaista Aziz and Huda Jawad, met up in London for the first time since lockdown for a catch-up and to watch the England quarter-final game against Ukraine. There was an excitement surrounding the England team and the leadership they had shown, both on and off the pitch. The Twitter thread Shaista posted captured the essence of this inclusive and diverse team who have made us feel welcome to the game.

Football has always played an important part in my family's life. My great grandmother was a devout Sunderland fan. My grandad spent his weekends supporting the local village team Marske United and before his passing, proudly lifted the Northern cup they won while he was vice

president of the club. My mother is a ludicrously vocally passionate Liverpool FC fan, and she makes sure everyone knows about it.

For me, football has always involved mixed emotions. Many of my memories with my grandad involved summers attending local football games at home and away.

But at one of the first games I attended, as a young visibly Muslim teenager, one of the opposition team seemed to really take offence to me being there. I thought I was imagining things, or being too sensitive, but his angry stares soon turned into him kicking the ball so hard in my direction that the strength of it, nearly knocked me off my feet. He never apologised. Everyone was comfortable with it being an accident, but I knew it was not.

My mother, whose footballing knowledge is the most impressive you will ever know, has never watched her team play since she became a Muslim in her 20s. It has never been seen as a safe place for women like us.

That is where our petition to ban racists from football started from: a feeling that football did not belong to us, reinforced by the racism experienced by three young England players. We launched the petition the morning after the final Euro game when England lost on penalties to Italy. Within 48 hours we had reached more than a million signatories.

Since that time we have had initial meetings with the Football Association to discuss the petition, plus their responsibility to ensure the protection of fans and players from racist abuse and the role that the Online Harms Bill will play in addressing online abuse.

Our visibility as Muslim women attracted a great deal of attention, because so few people associated football with women like us, but it has opened the door for so many people to share their story and feel that football belongs to them too. We have since seen, with our petition, that when presented with positive, supportive and hopeful messages of solidarity, people become inspired.

Although the online abuse towards players hit the headlines after that final Euro game, it is important to remember that a horrendous amount of abuse is experienced on the pitch itself. Last season, 10 per cent of all football fixtures in England and Wales contained at least one hate crime incident, with a rise of 150 per cent in arrests for racist or indecent chanting according to the Home Office.

Yet we know the issue of racism goes far beyond just the football pitch, tapping into a major societal issue that has had particular prominence over the last 18 months since the horrific murder of George Floyd. Yet, even with the hard conversations some are having to address racism in their own spaces, whether with family, friends or workplaces, there is a particular resistance from many, including our own government, to commit to doing any real work to tackle racism.

A recently commissioned government report on race and ethnic disparities following the Black Lives Matter movement and the impact of Covid-19 faced a huge backlash for not going far enough. It did not surprise many of us, who have continually felt failed whenever issues of racism have been brought to the fore.

The Labour party is not exempt: it has too often been absent and silent when it

comes to these issues. We are, after all, still awaiting the Forde Report, which seems to have been indefinitely stalled. And the complaints process within the party continues to create more harm to those impacted by racism and discrimination than to those who perpetrate it. The lack of training and proper independent complaints mechanism within the party to effectively deal with these issues means too little is done to protect minoritised members of Labour.

In the face of the disastrous foreign policy mess in Afghanistan and increasing Islamophobic and anti-refugee sentiment, we need to see a strong opposition response. Muslim voters and members do not want to feel they are taken for granted or silenced: if they continue to be, surely more will question their previously unshakeable support for Labour. **F**

Amna Abdullatif is assistant director for youth empowerment at the Anne Frank Trust and a Labour councillor in central Manchester



TAKING CARE

Labour values are vital to rebuilding the care sector—*Paul O'Kane MSP*

The past 18 months have been the most unprecedented time that any of us have ever lived through and in this period we have seen how vital our NHS and social care services are. I am proud to have been appointed as Scottish Labour's spokesperson for public health and social care in this critical period.

Across the United Kingdom, day after day, staff in our NHS and care staff in local authorities have gone above and beyond the call of duty to protect us all. They are truly Covid heroes and we rightly applauded them each Thursday night in the first lockdown.

But applause is not enough – this is a time like no other and collectively we must rise to the challenges that lie before us. We must rebuild and renew with a recovery plan for our NHS and social care that confronts the challenges we have all lived through; which values



our hardworking staff; and which fundamentally puts people at its heart.

Before Covid-19 our NHS was struggling – under-resourcing by the Tories and the SNP has led to sustained pressure on services. This has been exacerbated by the pandemic. We love our NHS and the staff who work in it but it is on its knees – doctors and nurses have told me of the stress they feel and why they want to retire or leave their profession. Nurses are burnt out. And carers feel completely undervalued, often leaving the care sector for jobs in hospitality or retail.

That is why Scottish Labour has consistently called, along with the trades unions, for better pay for care workers. Overworked and unappreciated, our Covid heroes were only offered a 20p uplift from the SNP. They deserve an immediate pay rise to at least £12 per hour, rising to £15 per hour in this current parliament.

In the Scottish parliament election, Scottish Labour outlined in our national recovery plan how we would seek to deliver a national care service that goes beyond the lacking proposal set out by the SNP. The NHS was founded by Labour as we rebuilt Britain from the ashes of war, so again must we rebuild from the pandemic with those same values – the principle of care from cradle to grave.

Scottish Labour advocate making social care freely available at the point of need by reversing the recent narrowing of eligibility criteria and removing all non-residential charges.

We in Scottish Labour and the Cooperative party will work to create a national care service that prioritises funding and retains local services to ensure that local expertise, accountability and community input are not lost. And we will put workers at the heart – with better pay; improved conditions; and better training and investment, to make clear that care is a valuable and valued career choice – not just ‘another job’.

This vision is in stark contrast to the proposals put forward by the SNP which, at the most basic level, are a reorganisation of the structures of social care. Their plans fail to address the major public spending commitments required to ensure that a national care service can “get it right for everyone”. From the consultation documents the Scottish government has produced, it commits to a large one-off increase in capital funding. While the amount seems impressive, it will mostly be consumed to fulfil the shortfall of £660m that currently exists in Scottish social care.

Without sufficient funding, the SNP will not achieve the ambitious change we need. And given their record on funding local authorities to provide care services over their 14 years in power with year-on-year cuts, there are deep concerns about what will be delivered when the bill comes before parliament.

My colleague in Westminster Liz Kendall MP has also highlighted the need to reform social care across England – improving integration, long term planning for the workforce and a real living wage.

We cannot come through the collective trauma of Covid-19 and go back to old ways. It can no longer be acceptable for cuts to care budgets leading to 10-minute care visits to the elderly and most vulnerable; it can no longer be acceptable that care workers do not have access to decent resources to do their job; it can no longer be acceptable that care workers are not paid a decent wage for this vital work we all may one day rely on.

As we return to parliament and the bill for a national care service is unveiled in Scotland, we will scrutinise the SNP to ensure that they do right by care workers and people receiving care as well as their families. We will work collaboratively across UK Labour to share ideas and best practice so that we learn and move forward to a better Britain as we recover from Covid-19. Together we will drive forward the change our country needs. **F**

Paul O’Kane is the Scottish Labour and Cooperative party MSP for West Scotland and shadow minister for public health and social care



TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Retail workers deserve more—*Abbie Winton*

The coronavirus pandemic has shone a light on the essential work carried out by those working in food retail, yet the future of work in the sector is looking less than bright. While the ‘clap for key workers’ presented a glimmer of hope that a shift in the public narrative surrounding

work in food retailing would bring real change, the reality fell short. Instances of abuse surged in supermarkets during the pandemic, and the government in Westminster voted against additional protections for these workers.

In Scotland the story was different as the Protection of Workers Bill was passed, yet this was just a small step towards giving retail workers the recognition they deserve. Pay in the sector remains low, and although several encouraging agreements were made to raise pay during the pandemic, workers continue to find themselves in a precarious situation due to low-hours contracts and worsening terms and conditions.

Labour has raised concerns regarding the future of the British supermarket sector and the uncertainty created by major takeovers, as well as more recently around driver and stock shortages. But the party needs to do more.

During the pandemic, there was a big shift to buying food online, meaning large numbers of new jobs were created in distribution and logistics as well as roles on the shop floor. Although these jobs were of varying quality and some might be lost as demand changes again, it demonstrates that what might have appeared to be a purely technological shift towards online shopping, was in fact powered by labour.

An industrial strategy for retail has long been lacking. We desperately need to address both the quality of work in food retail and the options for those workers who need to retrain for redeployment within the sector or elsewhere. The Commission on Workers and Technology, published by the Fabian Society and Community at the end of last year, put forward several policy recommendations, including new industry plans for sectors where jobs are most at risk and creating an integrated adult skills system with a training offer for everyone in England.

We also need to ensure that earnings inequalities in food retailing are minimised by raising pay and productivity over time.

Food retailers’ decisions to pay out bonuses to workers during the pandemic were welcome, yet this is not enough to demonstrate any real long-term shift in the value of work offered within sector. Instead hourly rates of pay need to be increased, along with the improvement of other terms and conditions – such as protections over hours that are also key. As the commission also recommended, we need to disincentivise employers from using contractors rather than employees.

Since the pandemic began, the use of outsourced labour platforms has been a growing trend. Labour's 'new deal for working people' campaign is encouraging here in that it highlights many of the steps needed to improve the quality of work, such as the guarantee of full employment rights from day one and the extension of these rights to the so-called 'bogus self-employed'.

The pandemic also underlined the importance of cooperative dialogue between unions, employers and the government to allow them to respond effectively to quickly changing demands. A similar partnership approach should be adopted in relation to technological change and the future of work in the sector.

The nature of work available within the sector is already changing, yet this work has long been segregated along lines of race, gender and age. New technologies can provide opportunities for new employment areas within the sector, but without immediate policy interventions these inequalities look set to be replicated. Thus, in order to ensure new roles are accessible to all groups, it will be essential that barriers to entering expanding employment areas are addressed. This means affordable public transport routes for out-of-town distribution centres; genuine flexible working arrangements for those with caring responsibilities; and retraining opportunities for those who need them. This may also require thinking differently about the services that are offered on the shop floor, to ensure that retail stores continue to contribute positively to the communities in which they are embedded.



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The pandemic has exposed the fragility of retail employment – but not all hope is lost. The acceleration towards the use of online shopping in food retail offers a window of opportunity to reshape work within the sector for the better, through making use of the productivity gains which new technologies can offer and the monotonous work it can replace. However, this will only shape a positive future for the majority if the benefits of change are distributed more equally.

Once the pandemic is over, the question remains as to which groups are given the opportunity of a brighter future. The necessary steps have been made clear, but we need to act now to ensure retail workers are not among those left behind. **F**

Abbie Winton is a doctoral researcher at the Work and Equalities Institute at the University of Manchester



BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

Our democracy is being eroded—*Dawn Butler MP*

I often say I either win or I learn, and I really have learned a lot over the last year and a half, as I have reflected on Labour's democratic processes for electing its leader and deputy leader. I have concluded that we need reform. As a democratic socialist party, money should not be the route to power and it should never talk more than ideas.

When I was a candidate for the deputy leader election, I had a vision of how to take the party forward. I, naively, thought every member would get to hear it. But energy, commitment and good ideas were not enough. Now I know how the system works, it is not something I want to repeat but I feel it is important to expose how expensive the process is in the hope that these barriers will not deter candidates from standing in the future.

Last year I was sitting in a community hall in Leicester when it dawned on me; we are not going to win the deputy leadership campaign. I had been listening to party members and they were complaining

that they had received a text from every other candidate apart from me. Later my core team sat me down and explained that we did not have the money to send texts to Labour members: even at 2p per text it would have cost at least £15,000 to send just one text to members, and candidates needed to send at least two. Tens of thousands of pounds, money we simply did not have. My heart sank. I had been second in the polling until then and just like that, I had been priced out of the race.

Why did it cost so much? Why were candidates excluded from using the already established party systems to communicate with members?

This is not about me: I am not complaining about how my process was run. It is about the inner workings of the Labour party and the financial aspect of running internal leadership campaigns. There is no reason why candidates spend in some cases over a million pounds to get elected in internal elections. When we are looking at reforming politics and including the excluded, we need to consider what stops people from participating in the first place. Some people just do not have the funds or the connections to access thousands of pounds to become a candidate. If we really want to reach out to 'ordinary' people, then we must remove this financial burden.

Money talks in US politics, and I am worried that we are rapidly moving towards an American-style system.

At the beginning of the leadership campaign there is the battle to secure nominations from fellow MPs, and what an eye-opener that was. I believe that the parliamentary Labour party (PLP) should not be the sole gatekeeper of who can stand. We had candidates who had fresh ideas that would have helped the debate but had to step down when it became clear they did not have the support of the PLP.

After securing the PLP nomination, next is acquiring a place on the ballot through nominations from CLPs, unions and socialist societies.

Candidates are then faced with a £2,500 charge for the membership list and £2,500 for the affiliates list. Shockingly, £5,000 for access to the party's excel spreadsheet. How can the party justify this cost? It is enough to put off any working-class or disadvantaged candidate from running in future.

Texts were not the only thing that candidates cannot afford; I did not have enough money to write to every eligible voter as this could cost as much as £454,000. My team and I also could not afford the costs

of an app, rumoured to cost £13,000, so we organised traditional small, localised phone sessions.

Labour must take a serious look at how it can improve its internal processes and implement good practice. For example, centrally producing a candidates' booklet which candidates contribute towards, block booking accommodation and train tickets and a less expensive way to communicate with members. Making the system fairer and less expensive would ensure that we have a broader selection of candidates.

Right now we are faced with an erosion of Britain's democracy with an elitist class at the very top, determined to hold onto power at any cost. We can not challenge them unless we ensure that as a party we are better and more ethical at every stage of our own process. We should be investing in ideas and a vision to change society. But if we only elect people who have lots of money or access to lots of money what does that say about us as a political party?

I was recently thrown out of parliament for calling Boris Johnson, our prime minister, a liar. It was a nerve wracking thing to challenge the system, but I think in politics that is what we need. And that is why I am challenging the Labour party internal system. Our democracy is on the brink of extinction and the world is on fire, if this isn't a wake-up call to do things differently, then what will it take? **F**

Dawn Butler is the Labour MP for Brent Central



BACKING A WINNER

Labour must capture a mood for change—*Kate Murray*

Margaret Thatcher famously said she wanted to 'go on and on' as prime minister. But her 11-year grip on power might yet be surpassed by Boris Johnson if he has his way. According to newspaper reports, Johnson is determined to exceed the Iron Lady's tenure in number 10 so that he can complete his 'levelling up' mission. The prospect of another decade or so of Johnson in charge is a horrifying one, not least



© Elliott Stallion

because we know that, far from achieving meaningful levelling up, any administration he heads will continue to be characterised by cronyism, incompetence and a deepening of inequality.

A Labour spokesperson pointed out in response that it is the British public, not the man himself, who will ultimately decide the length of his stay in the job. The spokesperson could well have added that Tory MPs are likely to have a big say too, given their willingness to ditch a sitting prime minister who has become an electoral liability. So will Johnson be granted his wish? Or is the gloss finally wearing off a man who, as the LSE's Tony Travers has put it, is a 'remarkable' election winner?

Sadly, to the immense frustration of those of us who have been watching the performance of the government with despair, progress has been slow. Despite a series of missteps, U-turns and scandals, the Conservatives have managed to keep winning, notching up a number of council by-election victories on top of their triumphs in Hartlepool and in too many of May's local elections.

There are small signs of change: senior Labour figures say they are at least getting a hearing on the doorstep once again. And there was better news in the opinion polls for Labour this month, with the party inching into its first lead over the Conservatives since January. Johnson's personal approval ratings have suffered a downturn too. But the shift is not yet significant enough to assume that a corner has been turned.

There are reasons for Labour's less than stellar showing: in particular Keir Starmer is right to say that in an unprecedented period of national isolation, Labour has been unable to make its case to the voters. It is true too that a government battling

with a crisis on the scale of Covid-19 is bound to bank extra goodwill from a public which is desperate for it to succeed. But now that we are emerging from the darkness, Labour will want to start doing much better as next year's council elections get closer. And to do that, it will need to look like a winning team.

The message from Starmer's listening tour over the summer seems to be that voters are looking for reasons to back the party once more. Principled opposition on the issues that matter will start to give them those reasons. So too will well-evidenced policies that respond to the damage done by austerity, Brexit and the pandemic as well as the challenges of globalisation and climate change. Internal issues will also be important: teams do not win when there is strife behind the scenes and we will have to move forward as a united movement, less focused on internal division, and committed to campaigning on the difference a Labour government can make. Above all, Labour needs to present a vision of the future which responds to growing dissatisfaction with the Johnson project with a positive alternative. It should feel grounded in values and not just in electoral strategising.

Voters like to feel they are backing a winner. In 1945, 1964 and 1997 Labour captured a mood for change. Many who stepped into the polling booth to put a cross next to a Labour candidate's name in those momentous elections must surely have felt a groundswell of hope and positivity as they backed the eventual winners. If Labour wants to puncture Boris Johnson's dream of going on and on, the party will have to look and sound like a worthy victor. **F**

Kate Murray is the editor of the Fabian Review

Forward not back

Strategies that have won elections for Labour in the past cannot be relied on to win elections in the future. Instead, the party needs to ask itself some searching questions, writes *Andrew Roe-Crines*



Andrew Roe-Crines is senior lecturer in British politics and communication at the University of Liverpool. He is the editor of Corbynmism in Perspective: The Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn, is published by Agenda

COMMENTATORS, POLITICAL SCIENTISTS, journalists and some Labour politicians themselves have developed an obsession over recent years with seeking to prescribe what they see as Labour's way back to government.

Many of them seemingly share a belief that Labour's successes of the past can point a way forward in the 2020s. Strategies that have previously worked – in 1964 and 1997 – should inform the renewal strategies of the Starmer leadership, so the story goes.

But before we consider the party's potential routes back to power, let us first consider the positions of the factions within Labour, broadly defined. Under the recent leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, it became fashionable for those who sit outside the 'Corbynista' faction to assume that Labour was on a certain path to electoral oblivion, just as happened to Michael Foot in 1983. Their belief was that Corbyn and Foot were similar – and that electoral results would be similar as a result. Their alternative to Corbyn's leadership was to pick up where Gordon Brown had left off and to take Labour forward under a 'reset' post-New Labour renewal strategy that sought to present itself as an extension of 'The Third Way' and, by proxy, a new approach to social democracy. Yet this alternative that moderates advocated had itself been defeated in the polls in 2010, and went on to gift the Conservatives a majority in 2015. Consequently, the 'safety net' that a retreat to New Labour presented to moderates would never be likely to succeed.

It has also been fashionable to present opposition to Corbynism as a benchmark against which Labour's current renewal strategies can and should be measured. Put simply, if a policy was advocated by Corbyn, then opposition to it now demonstrates reflection and renewal. However, the problems of the 2015 to 2020 opposition were not simply ideological. Indeed, the policies advocated by Corbyn and his leadership team were similar

(if not identical in many areas) to those Ed Miliband had put forward in 2015. It was only the policy on nationalised broadband which seemed surprising, and in the post-Covid world even this plan is looking less preposterous as homeworking becomes more normal.

This leaves the Labour party in a predicament: essentially the lessons of recent electoral history appear unfit to the task of pointing a way forward for the Labour party under Starmer.

The problems Labour faces in 2021 are unique to this moment. The Conservatives today are not the party of Margaret Thatcher. They have moved on, both under David Cameron and again under Boris Johnson. Moreover, the economy is not in the same position as it was in 1997. The solutions New Labour proposed to create economic prosperity in 1997 do not map onto the current structure of the UK and global economy. Social policy and the NHS are not facing the same challenges as they did in 2015, 2017 or even 2019. This landscape leaves the Labour party with a significant strategic problem, given the propensity of Labour advisors and commentators to retreat to history to find the solutions to current problems.

In the face of the current economic and social realities, the past offers no solutions, only unworkable or outdated ideas from bygone eras.

The solution for Labour must be to find new answers that fit the problems social democracy faces in 2021. But how can policies informed by social democracy be made appealing when applied to contexts never before faced by a forward-looking Labour party? First, Labour needs to reject the advice of the New Labour old guard whose counsel is best suited for the academic study of the Conservative government led by John Major, not for taking on the current prime minister. And if the Labour party wants to be in a position to seek high office, then the advice of Corbynite commentators should similarly be rejected. Corbynism (like Milibandism before it) was

**Labour needs
to reject the advice
of the New Labour
old guard**



© Ayad Hendy

suiting for economic and social conditions that the UK has moved beyond given the fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, Labour also needs to learn that simply growing a mass movement does not translate into votes in vital seats that Labour needs to win if it ever wants to enact its programme. It is those voters that Labour's renewal under Starmer needs to target.

To succeed, the Labour party will need to ask itself the most basic of questions – what is it for? What does the Labour party represent in the 2020s? When Keir Hardie was asked a similar question, his answer was that Labour exists to provide working-class representation in parliament. Starmer and the wider party need to find their own answer that reflects the current political world and is as simple as the one given at Labour's formation. Being there simply to oppose is not a reason to exist – it needs to have something to fight for. Over recent years the Labour party has seemingly failed to see this distinction, and has become consumed by dreams of inevitable victory whilst offering little or nothing positive to make that victory a reality.

Labour needs to find a new message. At present there is a tendency to rely on messages of old that worked well in the past ('24 Hours to Save the NHS', for example). When such messages are used excessively over time and when it becomes clear that the daily experiences of voters do not match those that Labour commentators present, then voters switch off from the message. If it is to renew,

Labour will not only need to explain what it is for, but also put into clear terms a basic plan for government.

The challenges Labour faces today are immense. The circumstances are different from any that Labour has faced in its history, and solutions need to be tailored to today's problems. So what should Labour be for, not against? In my view, Labour exists to represent and stand up for the interests of all, even those who are not Labour supporters or voters. This idea has become lost over recent years as divisions have taken the party away from this mission. There should be no groups in society which it is legitimate for Labour to ignore, or to portray as 'the enemy'. This combative form of thinking prevents Labour from being able to unite and present an appealing image to voters. Unity has led Labour to victory in the past, and it can do so again with a new ideological perspective in the 2020s. But if it is to convince voters, Labour needs to be credible.

The path back to credibility will require Labour to devise a short and simple set of domestic policies that voters can understand in three main areas of concern – jobs, housing and the cost of living. At its heart, Labour's programme for government should be understandable, short, and clear. By setting out its stall in this way, Labour will be able to say what it is for, and how it will achieve it, rather than simply saying what it is against. If it cannot come up with a clear offer, Labour will continue to face the multiple backlashes that come from burying the message under an ideological word salad. **F**

Working solutions

The world of work is changing for the worse. To create an economy in which every worker can thrive, Labour policy must adapt too.

Clare Lyonette, Tracey Warren and Luis Torres explain

Clare Lyonette is emerita professor at the Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick

Tracey Warren is a professor of sociology in the Nottingham University Business School, with expertise in work, employment and social inequalities

*Luis Torres is assistant professor in the Nottingham University Business School**

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC has exposed and exacerbated pre-existing inequalities in the workplace. Eighteen months of widespread debate over a disruption to the 'old normal' certainly suggest that there are real prospects for constructive change in how we work and how the economy is structured. There has never been a better time to ask: "Do we want to go back to business as usual?" So what lessons can we learn from this and how will those lessons help us to create an economy in which we can all flourish?

The jobs landscape

The jobs landscape changed radically over the last 18 months, generating discussions around the extent of positive and negative outcomes for workers, families and communities, and over what the future of work will and could look like. We carried out research into the working lives of thousands of employees, examining pre-pandemic data and tracking trends over the course of the pandemic.

Crises can offer valuable opportunities to re-evaluate, rethink, challenge and change taken-for-granted work practices. Perhaps key among the welcome pandemic-stimulated developments was the renewed conversation about the importance of those key workers who keep society running, but whose work is too often disregarded, dismissed, and poorly paid. Enforced home-working for many also popularised a long-standing debate over the conceivable locations of paid work, who can work from home or flexibly in other ways, and how this can be achieved. And more flexibility (for some) raised the potential for narrowing the unequal division of housework and childcare between men and women in the home.

Such ponderings over the potential impacts of the pandemic on how we might work better in future grew legion. Unfortunately, our research shows that the actual

impact on workers, and the reality for certain groups in particular, have been far from positive.

Pandemic pressures reinforced and even deepened existing inequalities in work. Job loss, for example, impacted hardest the already disadvantaged. Unemployment grew highest for minority ethnic groups, widening the white and minority ethnic unemployment gap. Unemployment rocketed for young people, while job loss barely affected workers in management and professional roles compared to those in routine/semi-routine occupations.

People in employment were not spared the effects of the pandemic. The risk of precarious work increased, particularly for women, ethnic minorities, and people employed in working class occupations. As employers found themselves operating in a more uncertain context, new hiring took place on the basis of part-time, temporary, fixed-term, casual work, and zero-hours contracts. There were deep inequalities too in which workers had access to flexible working arrangements: working-class women and men were much less likely to be able to work from home or alter their working days, to help cope with additional care responsibilities. Working-class women were also much more likely to work in customer and patient-facing jobs, bringing a greater exposure to health risks.

We should not rely on market forces to solve the problem of low-paid, precarious, and undervalued jobs

What do workers want?

Work-life balance, flexibility and mental health are important considerations for workers, as they look to their employers for certainty about the future. Our research shows that many employees are still far from achieving these demands: we found deepening inequalities in work-life balance and in access to quality flexible work arrangements, with growing levels of psychological distress among female and working-class workers especially.



Workers are now voicing more strongly than ever their wishes for employment opportunities that support their lives outside the workplace, and for jobs that enable them to maintain family and personal interests. People's renewed demands of their employers are for trust to replace archaic systems of heavy surveillance and penalty; and for recognition of the quality of work being done, rather than an out-dated emphasis on presenteeism and long hours. And people at work want their bosses and the companies they work for to understand the needs of the diverse workforce and to generate cultures and practices that support rather than disadvantage or discriminate against workers who do not fit the white male full-timer worker model, be it women, carers, people with disabilities, or workers from minority ethnic backgrounds.

What kind of world do we want to live in – and how should Labour respond?

As and when we emerge from Covid-19, we should not rely on market forces to solve the problem of low-paid, precarious, and undervalued jobs. The pandemic has highlighted that jobs that have been consistently low paid and precarious are essential for society; that flexible work and homeworking is possible in many sectors; that current welfare policies provide insufficient protection and higher levels of social security are possible.

Post-Covid-19, we cannot return to business as usual. It is in the interests of society as a whole that we strengthen our economic, labour market, and welfare systems to enable a sharing of risks and benefits among all people. In order to progress to that kind of world, policy makers must recognise that gender, ethnicity and class affect the likelihood of a person being in good or precarious work or out of a job.

To be effective, policies to improve working lives must tackle the root causes of these structural inequalities. We need stronger employment rights: the employment bill must be reintroduced to reduce insecurity for low-paid workers. The pandemic accelerated the trend for flexible patterns of work, but too many workers are unable to access such arrangements. The right to request flexible work should be the default, with the onus of proof on employers if rejected. The establishment of a well-resourced labour rights monitoring body would ensure legal enforcement to protect workers' rights.

Sectoral support is also vital. Post-Covid-19 recovery needs to include support for hardest hit sectors like retail, hospitality, leisure and tourism. Training also needs to be introduced, facilitating women to move into sectors which attract government support. The government concentration on STEM jobs is mistaken: other growth sectors will be in jobs dependent on face-to-face relationships, which currently have the highest growth rates in all countries.

Alongside this, a stronger safety net is key. The cut to universal credit and working tax credits planned for the end of September should be abandoned to avoid a fall in income at the same time as the coronavirus income support schemes come to an end.

To improve safety for workers, statutory sick pay (SSP) should be increased to the real living wage and extended to all workers with no income floor. This would benefit women in particular as they are the majority of low-paid workers and less likely to qualify for SSP.

Investment in care should be another important step in Labour's vision. Long-term sustainable investment in social infrastructure like nurseries, social care centres, domiciliary care and early years' education has the potential to create millions of jobs; allow many mothers to enter or progress in the labour market and into better jobs; and create a healthier, better educated and better cared-for population.

And the uneven impact of the pandemic makes clear that equality impact assessments should be part of a robust policy and decision-making process. The gender pay gap reporting requirement should be extended to include ethnicity, and companies should be required to put in place plans to address these gaps.

Class was an important divider in the pandemic impact, and the UK government should follow the Welsh government's lead by implementing across the UK the duty on public bodies to tackle socio-economic inequality. This should come alongside plans to reduce inequalities in paid and unpaid work. A comprehensive set of policy measures is required that recognises the interconnectedness of both the paid and unpaid work spheres. These should include measures to incentivise men to take on a greater share of caring work (for example dedicated fathers leave) and protections for those on caring leave or working flexibly.

The impact of the pandemic on our working lives has been unequally distributed, with women, working-class workers and minority-ethnic communities carrying a heavy pandemic work burden. Lessons must be learned for the route ahead: we can do things differently. **F**

**This article is co-authored by the UK Women's Budget Group*

State of the nation

The UK is not as polarised as many think, revealing an opportunity for Labour to bring the country back together as we recover from the pandemic. *Jill Rutter* explains



Jill Rutter is associate fellow at British Future

THE EARLY MONTHS of the pandemic were a time of unprecedented social unity. Neighbourly acts of kindness crossed ethnic, faith and class divides. Some 12.4 million people gave their time as volunteers and support for the NHS brought together a country that had been divided by Brexit. As we emerge from the pandemic we should be asking how we can build on the community spirit of 2020 to address deep-rooted social divisions in the UK. Research from Talk Together shows us how this might be achieved, and the future risks to the fabric of our society if we fail to act.

Undertaken between May 2020 and January 2021 by the think tank British Future for the Together Coalition, Talk Together was the largest ever public conversation about what divides us and what brings us together. Nearly 160,000 people took part, through open and nationally representative surveys and 67 guided discussions with experts and members of the public. Its methodology and size meant that Talk Together was a state of the nation report about people's feelings and aspirations in the year of Covid-19.

What divides?

We were told that the pandemic reminded people about the importance of community. Yet as figure one shows, most people felt that their immediate environs were united, but the country as whole was more divided. Poverty and economic inequality were the divisions that worried people most of all, with different lockdown regimes also reinforcing perceptions of divisions and inequalities across the UK's geographies.

Levels of political trust fell from the summer of 2020 onwards as dissatisfaction with the government's handling of the pandemic grew, although this did not translate into greater support for Labour. Rather, it dented trust across the board, a trend linked with support for divisive conspiracy theories.

Brexit was a topic of much debate, particularly in Northern Ireland. Yet while most people held the same views they did in 2016, it is likely that Brexit will gradually receive less prominence as people identify themselves more with political parties and less as 'remainers' or 'leavers'. Our last survey in January 2021 showed that leave and remain were the primary political identities of just 25 per cent of adults.

In Scotland, the independence debate has caused public concerns about the tone of political discourse

and its impact on people's relationships with family and friends who hold different views. People felt that political leaders and the public should commit to 'disagreeing well' with each other.

Immigration was also raised in the discussions and open survey, usually in relation to asylum seekers who have crossed the Channel. There was concern for their plight, balanced with the view that immigration needed to be effectively controlled and new arrivals encouraged to integrate.

Of concern was the prevalence of anti-Muslim prejudice in the UK, to which Covid-19 has added new dimensions. This appears most widespread in areas where the local population has little contact with Muslim people. Prejudice can lead to hate crime, which breeds mistrust and further divides communities. Many people also talked about their response to the Black Lives Matter movement, with about a quarter of people strongly supportive of its aims. There was a larger middle group who agreed with action to address racial inequalities, but had concerns about the conduct of the marches. A minority of people were vocal in their disagreement with the Black Lives Matter movement.

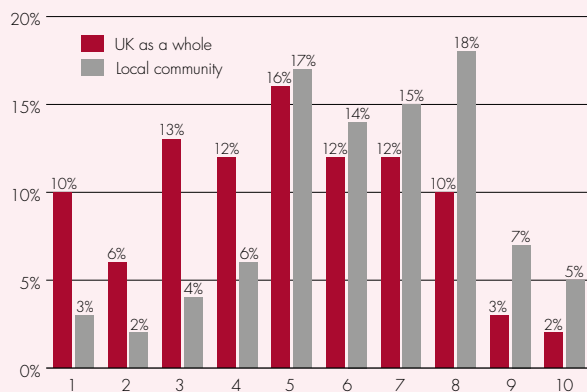
In the future, there is potential for issues such as immigration, faith, race and empire to divide us into those who are 'for' or 'against'. Rather they should be subjects about which we can have open conversations that lead to societal consensus, based on commitments to equal opportunity and shared opposition to prejudice.

The challenges ahead

Talk Together showed that we are less divided than we think we are, but more divided than we might want to be. It also highlighted future risks to social cohesion. In 2021 and 2022, the journey out of lockdown could be bumpy, as some feel that the process is too rapid, while others are frustrated if public health regulations remain in place.

Still, the biggest future challenge to social cohesion is gradual identity polarisation – a sentiment echoed in various other studies on polarisation in Britain published around the same time. Society has always been made up of people who have different sets of values and beliefs, between left and right, and in relation to where people sit on the social liberal-social conservative spectrum. But Brexit, immigration, race and empire, and free speech have become the focus for conflicts between social liberals and social conservatives to the extent to which people

**Figure 1: On a scale of 1 to 10 how united or divided are we at present?
(1 = very divided, 10 = very united)**



Source: ICM survey of 2,373 UK adults for Talk Together, 16–18 December 2020.

start to identify as belonging to a demarcated in-group, while ascribing negative characteristics to the ‘out-group’.

Three factors amplify social identity conflicts in the UK. First, social liberals are increasingly likely to live in big cities, while social conservatives are over-represented in towns, so there is less contact and less empathy between the ‘tribes’. Second, the UK’s two largest parties are now less likely to represent people with a diverse range of social identities, which incentivises politicians to use narratives or enact policies that appeal to their base, further polarising society. Third, high-salience identity conflicts that require a person to be ‘for’ or ‘against’ an issue are increasingly fought on social media, with its echo chamber effect leading to less exposure to views from the other side.

The UK is not the United States with its two demarcated camps and little contact or understanding between them. Most people in the UK can still find common ground with those with whom they disagree, at least in real world interactions. But without action to bridge social divides, this country risks further polarisation. In such a situation there is a greater likelihood that extremist or populist belief systems will take hold, which further undermines the fabric of society.

The case for social connection

In May 2020, ICM research found that 60 per cent of people agreed “the public’s response to the Covid-19 crisis showed the unity of our society more than its divides”, but this figure fell as the pandemic progressed. Narratives about unity are important, but Talk Together showed that they will not resonate with the public unless they are combined with a recognition of social divisions and a commitment in policy to address them.

Bridging social connections – across ethnic, faith, age, class and political divides – characterise cohesive societies and will help the UK avoid damaging polarisation. The charity leader Jon Yates argues most of us have an innate tendency to gravitate to people similar to ourselves and to identify with ‘in-groups’. This can lead to ‘us and them’ divides; in Northern Ireland this has led to sectarian violence. Bridging social connections help people

accommodate political differences, as well as reducing stereotypes and prejudice about ‘outgroups’. In turn, this helps develop empathy, trust and shared identities.

“People are very cliquy by nature. But things like sport, church, community, food banks, volunteering, that’s how you meet new people. But people also stick to what you know. It’s human nature.”

– Participant in Talk Together public discussion, Scotland, November 2020

The Covid-19 relief effort crossed social divides and it is essential that government and our institutions build on these new connections. This requires the government responds to the Kruger report which it commissioned to look at how this could be achieved – ten months after publication it had not done so. It should appoint a social connection ‘champion’ at ministerial level in every department. Practical actions that increase bridging social connections include mixed tenure housing and making sure school children have the opportunity to meet with peers from different backgrounds.

Neighbourhoods that have more bridging connections tend to be more cohesive and can better accommodate change, including that brought about by immigration. The Westminster government, devolved administrations, regional mayors and councils need to implement social cohesion/integration strategies and put social connection at the heart of them. While England published its Integrated Communities Action Plan in early 2019, action to take forward its recommendations has ground to a halt.

We also need to make sure people can communicate with each other. No one should be prevented from connecting with others because they cannot speak English, lack functional literacy or because they do not have the infrastructure or skills to connect online. Recent football successes were perfect opportunities for such conversations about inclusive national identities.

Workplaces are locations where many adults meet and mix with those from different backgrounds to their own. It shows there is a need to broaden the conversation about social cohesion to include employers. On top of this, communities also need to have places where people can meet and interact: high streets, parks, libraries and leisure centres. New levelling up funding should have social connection as an explicit aim.

Social cohesion also presents challenges for party politics. The Conservatives risk losing suburban and home counties seats if they play to a socially conservative base and sound too tough on issues such as immigration and race. Labour, too, must address identity polarisation by reconnecting with voters in its former heartlands. In doing so it needs to talk about social cohesion and issues that polarise, such as immigration and race. These conversations must go beyond party activists to include voters.

Talk Together showed a strong consensus that people support fair and cohesive societies. Over eight in 10 people agree that “people get along best when there is two-way tolerance and respect for each other”. It shows that Labour must speak for an agenda that prioritises fairness to those who come to the UK and to the communities that they join. Above all it needs to make a strong case for social connection. ■



Q&A: KEIR STARMER

“I LOVE THIS COUNTRY AND WE CAN ACHIEVE SO MUCH MORE”

Keir Starmer wants Britain to be the best place to grow up and grow old in. So how do we get there? Labour's leader answers questions from the Fabian Review

How would you sum up your first year and a half as Labour leader?

Far from a typical first year.

I have never underestimated the task I had to turn the Labour party inside out, following the last general election, but when Covid-19 hit it meant we had to rip up our plans for day one onwards and start again.

It's been frustrating to be locked down and unable to get out and about – I had to make my acceptance speech to my living room furniture – but compared to what many people have endured over the last 18 months, I can't complain and like everyone else we have got on with it.

This summer has been my first opportunity to really get out around the country, to share my ideas and set out Labour's vision. Given I've been visiting seats held by the Conservatives, the reception has been really encouraging – people are open to giving Labour a hearing, they like our plans, and want to hear more.

I'm more determined than ever to secure more Labour wins, to grasp the opportunity that emerging from the pandemic provides, and to start changing things for the better.

When you stood for the leadership, no one could have predicted the challenges Covid-19 would bring. Now we are emerging from the pandemic, how would Labour steer the recovery?

It's clear that we can't go back and simply patch up a failed system. The

pandemic brutally exposed the inequality and injustice in our country that 11 years of Conservative government has exacerbated.

We need to support our NHS. We need a rescue plan to deal with the record waiting lists of patients in desperate need of operations.

We can't allow this generation of children to be permanently left behind. They should be at the heart of our recovery, receiving all the support and resources they need to catch up on the learning they missed out on.

People ought to feel safe in their own communities, not left unprotected by a decade of cuts to policing, justice and youth services. As well as more bobbies on the beat, we'd support youth services to steer kids away from crime.

And our economy is too low paid and too insecure for too many people. Labour's new deal for workers, and plans to make, buy and sell more here in Britain would create the kind of jobs that you can raise a family on.

I love this country and we can achieve so much more. With Labour under my leadership, we can.

What is your vision for the country under a Labour government – and how do you get that across to those voters who say they don't know what you stand for?

A Britain which is the best place to grow up in and the best place to grow old in; world class public services for all; and

an economy which provides security and dignity for workers.

That's the vision I started setting out this summer. I'll be saying more about it in my conference speech, and getting it across to people every day until the next election.

Many of the voters in areas which suffered most under austerity have turned away from Labour. Why do you think this is – and how can we win them back?

I'm under no illusions about the scale of the task we face to win back voters' trust.

My job is to make three things clear. First, that our plans are credible, which too many voters haven't believed about us for too long.

Second, that we are in tune with the challenges people are facing every day, which is exactly what I've been focused on this summer, highlighting the Conservatives' record of failure across areas like crime, education and work.

Third, we back their aspirations for a better future, and will help deliver them with a real living wage to tackle the scourge of in-work poverty, new rights around flexible working, and an economy where we make, buy and sell more in Britain.

And how can Labour both win back its traditional support which didn't vote for the party in 2019 while retaining the – often younger – voters who want to see something more radical?

I reject the idea that we have to split up the population and choose between



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different sections of society. We have far more in common than that which divides us in this country.

From young people to those nearing retirement, everyone wants to be treated with dignity at work. Whether you live in urban areas blighted by anti-social behaviour, or small towns targeted by county lines gangs, you deserve to feel safe in your own community.

And as we have demonstrated through Labour's plans for a green economic recovery, there is no conflict between tackling the climate crisis and delivering well paid, highly skilled jobs.

The climate crisis is perhaps the biggest issue of our time. How would Labour address it?

We are at a critical moment, requiring urgent action in the next decade to drive down emissions. That means Britain leading by example at home, and doing

everything possible to bring about a plan at COP 26 which averts a climate crisis.

Labour has ambitious policies that I'm proud of. As the first step of a Green New Deal, Labour would bring forward £30bn of investment, creating 400,000 green jobs; pass a Clean Air Act; and check every policy of our government against a Net Zero and Nature Test, to ensure they are compatible with UK climate targets.

COP is the moment when the ambition around 1.5 degrees can and must be translated into concrete action, with unequivocal commitment to deliver. We are pressing the government to make it matter.

Is Brexit now history for Labour? How would you seek to resolve the problems our withdrawal from the EU has created?

The argument is no longer leave versus remain, but about ensuring the deals being made now will support our

businesses, secure our industries and allow the UK to prosper.

The chaos around the Northern Ireland protocol and the supply issues we have seen over the summer show that the government needs holding to account on these issues.

In regards to Northern Ireland I know from my experience working to implement the Good Friday Agreement how delicate the peace process is, and we will be pushing for a serious, sustainable resolution to the instability. We are determined to work with business and unions over the coming weeks to put together proposals to try and fill in some of the gaps in the government's bad deal.

Too often, Labour's efforts and the media coverage the party gets are still dominated by internal arguments. Can we ever hope to build an election-winning broad church?

We will go into the next election with a bold manifesto, relevant to the needs of today, and rooted in my and the party's values: a strong sense of justice, which drove some of the work I am most proud of with the NUM and Doreen Lawrence; and the common decency, honesty and integrity we saw triumph in Batley and Spennings. I know that those values and the policies we are offering are what's needed to win the next election, and that the party can unite around them.

You were a member of the Fabian Society's executive committee before you became party leader. How do you see Fabianism informing the party in the run-up to the next election?

Look at the challenges we face: the climate crisis, a generation of children who missed out on months of education, a social care system that fails to guarantee dignity in old age, and millions of workers in low paid, insecure work.

These are problems of inequality that can only be solved with progressive solutions. The efforts of the Fabian Society in helping develop those solutions, particularly with regards to areas like the future of work and social security, are invaluable. **F**

*Read more of Keir Starmer's vision in *The Road Ahead*, his pamphlet for the Fabian Society distributed with this issue of the Fabian Review, or available at www.fabians.org.uk*

Fabian Fringe at Labour Party Conference 2021

	Event	Speakers include	Time/Venue	Partner
SUNDAY 26 SEPTEMBER	Stronger Together Public services that work	Anneliese Dodds MP, Jonathan Ashworth MP, Kate Green MP	11:00–12:20 Lancing	Labour Policy Roadmap
	Scottish Fabians: Winning Scotland The road back to power in the UK	Sarah Boyack MSP	13:00–14:30 Lancing	SCOTTISH FABIANS
	Stronger Together A future where families come first	Anneliese Dodds MP, Cat Smith MP, Sara Hyde (FWN)	15:00–16:30 Glyndebourne	Labour Policy Roadmap
	A Year of Change The future of the gig economy	Yvette Cooper MP, Mick Rix (GMB), Stephen Timms MP	17:00–18:30 Lancing	Uber
	Mums in Politics Booklet launch rally	Tulip Siddiq MP, Ellie Reeves MP, Alex Davies-Jones MP	17:00–18:30 Glyndebourne	FABIAN WOMEN
	Fabian Question Time	Anneliese Dodds MP, Polly Toynbee (The Guardian), John Healey MP	19:00 Glyndebourne	FABIAN SOCIETY

MONDAY 27	Local Ties? Building better and happier workforces in public services	Jackie Baillie MSP, Mary Bousted (NEU), Rob Yeldham (CSP), Susan Tyler (RCM)	12:30–14:00 Lancing	UNIONS21 building tomorrow's unions
	Electric Avenue How to make the switch to electric vehicles fast, affordable and good for communities	Kerry McCarthy MP, Jill Duggan (Environmental Defence Fund)	13:00–14:00 Glyndebourne	LVE
	Business and Sustainability Can UK plc rise to the challenge?	Ed Miliband MP, Seema Malhotra MP	17:30–19:00 Lancing	KPMG
	In Conversation with Anas Sarwar MSP	Anas Sarwar MSP, Torcuil Crichton (Daily Record)	19:00–20:30 Glyndebourne	Daily Record
	The Fabian Society Reception For Fabian members and invited guests only	Kate Green MP, Rachel Reeves MP	20:00–22:00 Clarence Room Hilton Hotel	Google

LOCATION

All events, unless stated otherwise, will be held at the Holiday Inn on the Brighton Seafront, 137 Kings Rd, BN1 2JF. The Fabian Society Reception will take place at the Hilton Brighton Metropole.

For more details about our fringe events visit fabians.org.uk/events



FABIAN STALL

Come and see us at stall 93 at the conference exhibition

	Event	Speakers include	Time/Venue	Partner
TUESDAY 28	Sisters and the Pay Gap	Rachel Reeves MP, Gail Cartmail (Unite the Union)	11:00–12:00 Glyndebourne	
	Recovery and Resilience Rebuilding household finances in the wake of the pandemic	Richard Lane (StepChange), Anneliese Dodds MP, Helen Barnard (JRF), Sonia Sodha (The Observer)	12:30–14:00 Lancing	
	Second Best Does Labour need to work with other parties to win power?	Clive Lewis MP, Jess Garland (ERS), Sir John Curtice (Strathclyde University), Ayesha Hazarika (columnist), Cllr Shaista Aziz	13:00–14:30 Glyndebourne	
	Ending Child Poverty Can Labour win the argument?	Jonathan Reynolds MP, Wes Streeting MP, Andrew Harrop, Alison Garnham (CPAG)	17:00–18:30 Lancing	
	Reconnecting Putting community power at the heart of Labour's future	Steve Reed MP, Cllr Marianna Masters	19:00–20:30 Lancing	
	Germany Decided What do the German elections mean for the British left?	Catherine West MP, Lloyd Russell-Moyle MP	19:00–20:30 Glyndebourne	

ROUNDTABLES

By invitation only (events@fabians.org.uk)

Monday 27

Digital Public Services That Work for Everyone

Managing the risks, fulfilling the potential



Tuesday 28

Finance and the Recovery

How can the financial services sector support businesses, people and places to thrive

Bridget Phillipson MP



Tuesday 28

Bouncing Back

How small business can thrive after the pandemic

Seema Malhotra MP,
Abena Oppong-Asare MP



Tuesday 28

Progressive Federalism

What can Britain learn from Germany?

Anneliese Dodds MP,
Prof Sabine Kropp, Arne Lietz



YOUNG FABIANs EVENTS

Sunday 26 11:00–12:30 Lancing

Britain's Broken Housing Sector

Experiences and Policy Solutions Report Launch

Monday 27 14:30–16:00 Lancing

Tackling Knife Crime

Lessons from the Midlands

YOUNG FABIANs

Bigger and bolder

We need a radical overhaul of our education system to give all children the opportunity to fulfil their potential – wherever they are born. *Basit Mahmood* explains



Basit Mahmood is co-editor at Left Foot Forward

E DUCATION IS SUPPOSED to be the great social leveler, a means through which you can better your life chances and thanks to your own hard work and merit, climb the social mobility ladder. Where you are born or what type of school you went to, should have no bearing on how far you can get in life. We are a meritocracy, we are told – those who rise to the top have earned their place to get there and those who do not have anyone to blame but themselves.

That is the myth so many of us like to believe and continue to tell ourselves. In fact, where you are born, the type of school you went to and the occupation of your parents has more of an impact on how far you can get in life than in most other comparable countries in Europe, among which Britain has one of the worst social mobility records. According to the OECD, around 50 per cent of a person's income can be explained by his or her parents' income. The recent A-level and GCSE results have once more exposed the stark educational inequalities that exist in our society with 70.1 per cent of A-level grades at independent schools awarded an A or above. By comparison only 39.3 per cent were awarded the same grade in comprehensive schools.

Even before the pandemic, the continued dominance of a privately educated elite over the country's leading professions was a stain upon our society. Despite private schools making up just 7 per cent of the country's schools, pupils from those schools go on to make up 65 per cent of senior judges, 44 per cent of newspaper columnists, along with 43 per cent of the UK's 100 most influential editors and broadcasters. The key decision-makers in our society continue to be drawn from a narrow pool of talent, while we continue to ignore the remaining 93 per cent, harming the very fabric of our society.

Every now and again our education system catapults a few lucky souls into a different social class, who tell

themselves they have 'made it'. This is then used as an argument to legitimise the current system and show there is opportunity for all. Yet winners under the current system are an exception rather than the rule. If anything, social mobility has gone into reverse. Schemes like the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), now scrapped in England, and Aimhigher, which ran from 2004 to 2010, made a real difference: without them people like me would never have been able to go on to university.

All of this explains why the Labour party must now take bold and radical action to address educational inequality in our country, to ensure that all feel like they have a stake in our society and a decent shot in life. We can no longer afford simply to manage such an unfair system better or tinker around the edges.

Among the first changes the Labour party ought to bring in is reinstating schemes such as EMA and

Aimhigher. But it must also go bigger and bolder to champion an integrated and uniform educational system. That must mean an end to private schools. Undoubtedly there are those who will claim that such a policy would be an outlandish proposal, one that is out of touch with reality – yet it is a reality in countries like Finland.

After the government there abolished its fee-paying schools in the 1970s, the country saw a narrowing of the attainment gap between the richest and poorest students.

Private schools not only perpetuate inequalities in society down the generations, they also harm the social cohesion we all value, by allowing a wealthy elite to pull ahead of others for no other reason than the privileges their wealth can buy. I have often been told that abolition would be an attack on the choice of parents, but this is not about attacking parents, it is about tackling the structures that promote systemic inequality in society. As far as an

The recent A-level and GCSE results have once more exposed the stark educational inequalities in society



© Jeswin Thomas

attack on personal freedoms is concerned, society already bans many things that are harmful. A parent would not be allowed to bribe a tutor to give their child good grades just because they cared for their child.

Some, even on the left, have argued that abolishing private schools would be tantamount to ‘levelling down’, ‘punishing the success’ of private school pupils. The emphasis, they say, should be on ‘levelling up’ and improving funding and outcomes in state schools.

Yet even when students from working-class backgrounds achieve the same degree result from the same university as their more affluent peers, they still go on to earn less and are less likely to be found in senior positions within elitist occupations. Research by the Social Mobility Commission showed that people from working class backgrounds who get a professional job are paid an average of £6,800 (17 per cent) less each year than colleagues from more affluent backgrounds.

Class casts a far longer shadow than many of us would like to admit. This is why Labour also needs to adopt a broader view of social mobility, one that does not just focus on getting those from working-class backgrounds who attend state schools into elite universities or professions but one that also looks at how to help them get on once they are there.

Those from working-class and state school backgrounds are less likely to be found in higher paid and senior roles within elite professions, according to the Labour Force Survey, the UK’s largest employment survey. To combat class-based discrimination, the next Labour government should ask big firms to publish data on their class pay gaps. Major companies have already begun collecting data from employees about the type of school they went to, whether or not they were on free school meals as students and parental occupation. Publishing data on the class background of all staff, in particular those in senior leadership positions, will allow for transparency and benchmarking across firms and sectors.

The party should also push for legislation to tackle class inequality in the workplace. Socioeconomic background should be put on an equal footing as other protected characteristics found in the Equality Act of 2010, which would make discrimination on the basis of class illegal.

There is hope in that by adopting some of the policies outlined here, Labour can take the first steps towards a radical overhaul of our segregated education system to allow all of our young people to fulfil their potential wherever they are born.

Another education system is possible, it just requires us to be bold enough to get there. **F**

A true testing ground

To demonstrate that it is relevant and credible, Labour must become the party of aspiration – and one bellwether region shows how that can be done. *Rory Palmer* explains



Rory Palmer was Labour MEP for the East Midlands from 2017 to 2020 and deputy city mayor of Leicester from 2011 to 2017. He is a member of the Fabian Society executive committee

BACK IN 2001, as a young activist growing up in the East Midlands, I was told by a senior party official in no uncertain terms: “You cannot win the country without winning the East Midlands.”

This is not just an obvious statement of electoral arithmetic but also a more profound observation about the popularity, credibility and cultural appeal of Labour’s offer. Every region and part of the country can tell its own story in relation to Labour’s recent electoral performances and each is equally important. But there is a particular significance about the East Midlands, a region that shares boundaries with the north and the south, that should be explored.

In recent years, different analytical frames have been presented to explain aspects of Labour’s electoral story: ‘southern discomfort’, ‘the Red Wall’, and so on. These narratives are all interesting but each carries its limitations in really understanding what has happened to Labour. Few constituencies fit neatly into one narrative frame. But in exploring Labour’s past performance and more importantly how it can renew, the East Midlands – as a collection of constituencies with a diverse range of socioeconomic characteristics and electoral patterns – carries instructive lessons for Labour’s route to recovery and renewal.

The region is neither north or south. It stretches from the border of the South Yorkshire coalfields to the very tip of the home counties. In the west, the region touches Greater Manchester, spanning across the country to the east coast. In places, this middle of England region has the real feel of ‘Middle England’.

Historically, the region has been viewed as a bellwether for the two main parties. Its mix of large, diverse university cities, industrial heartlands, rolling countryside and market towns means winning a majority of the region’s seats is no easy feat and requires building a broad coalition of support through a platform that has genuine appeal right across the electorate.

Winning in the East Midlands is thus symbolic, and is also crucial to showing that we have a nationwide offer with genuine cut-through and appeal. Yet there are seats Labour has not won since 2005 and which have been fought as marginals at every election since – like Broxtowe, Erewash and Loughborough along the M1 corridor – that will have to be gained to win a majority.

Twenty years ago, at the 2001 general election, the Labour government secured re-election. It did so winning 28 of the 44 constituencies in the East Midlands – a regional total that actually included losing two seats, including Chesterfield at Tony Benn’s retirement from parliament. In this election, Labour secured a vote share in the East Midlands of 45.1 per cent. The last time Labour won a general election in 2005, 26 East Midlands constituencies were won.

Almost two decades is of course a long time – not least in political terms. After Labour’s disastrous 2019 general election, the party now holds just eight of them – and just 31.7 per cent of the vote share. With the exception of Chesterfield, all of these seats are based in the region’s large cities of Derby, Leicester and Nottingham.

Bassetlaw was lost with a swing against Labour of 18.4 per cent (the largest constituency swing from Labour to the Tories). Mansfield, which was lost in 2017, recorded the second largest Tory vote increase in 2019.

Dennis Skinner’s Bolsover – a seat which had Labour’s largest majority in the region at the 2001 election – was lost with a swing of 11.5 percentage points. The largest Labour majority in the region is now in inner-city Leicester in Leicester South, illustrating how Labour’s base has flipped from the coalfields to the cities.

As Keir Starmer has often said since the 2019 result, Labour has a mountain to climb. Scaling that mountain demands significant improvement in Labour’s electoral performance in all parts of the country. The scale and complexity of the challenge in the East Midlands typifies and encapsulates the now tricky terrain facing Labour in

People need to know that Labour – when it gets things right – can deliver the big change the country needs



rebuilding a broad coalition of support and in renewing its offer to secure widespread appeal across the country.

If Labour builds a future vision that is relevant and credible to voters across the diverse constituencies in the East Midlands, then we will be heading in the right direction again.

The first step is to remind people – and for those too young to know, to tell them – that Labour can and has been an effective, radical party of government. We must speak up and defend our record in government and the difference we made – not for history’s sake but to help set the foundations of our future offer and its narrative.

The way in which the Conservatives have been allowed to set the narrative around the future of communities in the East Midlands – and beyond – with their notion of ‘levelling up’ is something Labour must address urgently. One of the explanations why this narrative has taken hold in recent years is the failure to defend the difference the last Labour government made in communities across the East Midlands and elsewhere.

Elections must be about the future and we will be judged on our forward offer. But the failure to mount an unrelenting defence of the policy interventions that were laying the foundations of recovery and renewal in former coalfield and industrial communities in the Midlands and the north from 1997 onwards has helped give the Tories a free pass in defining levelling up. It is also allowing them the luxury of avoiding any culpability for what has happened to these areas – both in relation to the austerity of 2010 onwards and the dismantling of mainstay industry in the 1990s.

The investment in public services and infrastructure together with a social policy agenda anchored around life-changing interventions like Sure Start, the New Deal and tax credits was genuinely transformative in communities that had been decimated by the industrial decline under the Conservatives in the 1980s and 1990s. Much of

that transformative intervention – which was moving the dial on deep-rooted socioeconomic and health inequalities – has become forgotten history in recent years.

The economic decline and its social consequences in former coalfield areas were always going to take a generation to repair. That is not to be unambitious: it is pragmatic given the impact of major structural economic damage with widespread unemployment that passed from one generation to the next. As Fabians, we understand that economic and social progress is secured gradually. That progress was happening as a result of the last Labour government’s efforts and it should have been better defended and explained in recent years. People need to know that Labour – when it gets things right – can deliver the big change the country needs: that Labour was and can be a party of government.

Looking to the more recent past, some attempt to explain the 2017 and 2019 results entirely through the prism of Brexit. This does not chime with my experience on the doorsteps across the East Midlands. Undoubtedly, Brexit was a factor – introducing a complex stream of political turbulence and chaos into an already volatile and shifting electoral landscape.

But Brexit has happened, and whilst its implications continue to be felt, we need to understand where voters see Britain’s place in the world today, after leaving the EU. Over recent years I have had hundreds of conversations with people who voted to leave. It would be a fundamental mistake to interpret their vote as a mandate for a shrinking of Britain’s place and standing in the world. Doorstep conversations over two decades in constituencies from the university-town of Loughborough to coalfield Bassetlaw speak to a strong sense of healthy patriotism drawing on Britain’s role as a responsible and leading global partner.

In many parts of the region there is a strong and proud tradition of military service, often across generations of

families. People expect Labour to understand and recognise this as part of a positive expression of our country's values and role in the world. On a school study visit to Brussels I organised during my time as an MEP, a group of young people from the East Midlands expressed strong views on both sides of the Brexit debate, but on visits to the first world war battlefields around Ypres and to NATO HQ in Brussels there was universal agreement that our country is at its best when it looks outward to the world, demonstrating a leadership built on a steadfast commitment to human rights and a global rules-based system.

The next issue Labour must address is: "You can't spend what you haven't got." Anyone who has been anywhere near a doorstep in recent years will have heard statements like this. I have heard it on doorsteps right across the East Midlands and it goes to the heart of a simple yet absolutely vital fact: essential to Labour's route back to power is economic credibility.

In recent elections, East Midlands voters did not trust Labour on public finances – a trend that played out in other regions and across the country. On the doorsteps in all parts of the region voters found policy commitments they liked in the 2017 and 2019 manifestos, but fundamentally did not see Labour's economic plans as credible. This was coupled with strong and deeply held views about Labour's leader at those elections, making it impossible to win a fair hearing from voters. Large numbers of the electorate across the region's diversity of constituencies simply did not see Labour led by Jeremy Corbyn as a credible choice.

Many voters felt that Labour had drifted away from them, and not the other way round.

The first fundamental challenge for Keir Starmer and Labour's frontbench is therefore to establish leadership credibility in the eyes of the electorate across the region. Securing trust on economic policy is key in doing that; the first building block from which to set out a transformative Labour programme which allows East Midlands communities to fulfil their potential again after a decade of austerity and the impact of the pandemic.

Integral to this is the urgent need to position Labour once again as the party of aspiration. Communities the length and breadth of the East Midlands, as elsewhere, are ambitious and aspirational. There is a deeply held sense, whether in former coalfields towns or diverse inner-city areas, that hard work and enterprise should be rewarded.

The innovation and exciting tech start-ups are not just found on the enterprise parks around the region's universities, important as they are; they are just as likely to be found in the industrial units now located on the old coal pit sites. Labour has to be unequivocally on the side of this enterprise culture and aspiration – setting out ambitious policies to nurture and unlock it.

A renewed Labour approach to aspiration can be the bedrock of Labour's forward offer for communities facing the harshest challenges post-pandemic and because of a decade of austerity. Crucially, if crafted effectively, it can outflank the Tories' levelling up agenda. But if this

approach is to succeed, policies that seek to embed a new aspiration need to be built on security and empowerment.

The security of a strong foundation of public services in all communities is crucial, across the NHS, social care, education and skills. The investment in core public services across East Midlands communities raised aspirations and helped revive civic pride that had been trampled during the years of industrial decline. Policing and community safety used to be one of Labour's strongest pillars on the doorsteps. That was not the case in recent elections and it is right that efforts are well underway to rebuild Labour's appeal in these important policy areas.

Building a renewed sense of aspiration also demands a bold approach to empowering communities to shape their own futures, truly unlocking the potential of our local leaders to take their areas forward. In recent years, it feels the distance between communities in the East Midlands and decision-making in Westminster has got wider. That is a sentiment felt in many other parts of the country. The East Midlands – with the exception of the South East outside London – is the only region without a metro mayor, but empowering communities demands more than a debate on governance structures. Labour must lead the shaping of a vision for devolution that is about empowerment, aspiration and improving life chances.

If Labour is to recover it must build a forward offer that blends these core pillars of leadership and economic policy credibility; aspiration, empowerment and security in our communities; and a strong sense of Britain's place in the world post-Brexit. Doing this in the East Midlands – the very heart of the country bridging north and south – will read across into progress in other regions as well.

It is reassuring that in the first year of Keir Starmer's leadership, these core pillars have been very much evident in Labour's narrative. There is a long way to go to repair the damage of Labour's electoral disaster of 2019.

The challenge to remould a coalition of support across the electorate in constituencies that Labour has not won since 2005 and where incumbent Conservative majorities have grown is huge and complex.

It will take time to repair the damage of Labour's disastrous result in 2019 and rebuild in places where voters feel Labour drifted too far away from them. To be competitive again at a general election Labour must return to winning ways in the north and in the south, and everywhere in between. That everywhere in between is the East Midlands. In electoral terms a bellwether region, in wider terms now a testbed for Labour's recovery in policy and cultural terms.

It is clear the party has the determination and resolve to rebuild and renew its offer to win again in all parts of the country. What that senior party official told me all those years ago – that Labour can't win the country without winning the East Midlands – remains a fundamental political truth.

What happens in the East Midlands in these coming years will be crucial to Labour's fortunes across the country. ■

In recent years, it feels the distance between communities in the East Midlands and decision-making in Westminster has got wider

Inescapable lessons

Palestine need not be a polarising issue for Starmer's Labour—*Peter Hain*



Lord Hain is a former Labour Middle East minister and Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. His memoir, A Pretoria Boy: South Africa's Public Enemy Number One has just been published by Icon Books

THOSE WHO ALLOWED or encouraged antisemitism to flourish in Labour between 2015 and 2019 not only stabbed our Jewish members and supporters in the heart, they also sold out the Palestinians.

When was the Palestinian case heard during this painful period of recent Labour history? Party leaders contaminated by antisemitism lacked credibility if they condemned Israeli atrocities in Gaza or new Israeli government laws discriminating against its Arab citizens.

But now that our leadership is confronting rather than tolerating antisemitism, we need to move our policy forward.

I am both an active supporter of the Palestinian cause going back over 50 years and a friend of Israel. As a British minister for the Middle East in 1999 to 2001, I worked closely with both Israeli ministers and Palestinian leaders. My record of fighting apartheid, racism and antisemitism is well established.

That should be our collective starting point as a party. But it is also time for some other home truths.

It is entirely legitimate to condemn, in line with international law, right-wing Israeli government policies to increase settlements in Palestinian territories, and to evict Arab Israeli citizens from their East Jerusalem homes. It is equally legitimate to argue with apologists for those policies that they are promoting extremism amongst Palestinians: the failure to successfully conclude negotiations with Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization in the early 2000s led to it being eclipsed by Hamas and in time could well lead to ISIS in Gaza.

It is also fair to question whether the two-state solution Labour, along with the UN, UK, Europe and the US has promoted, is any longer viable when life for Palestinians living on their own land in the West Bank and East Jerusalem is a constant civil-rights struggle: they have little to no say over an archipelago of isolated Palestinian

territorial islands within a sea of Israeli controls, checkpoints, bases, and settlements.

If Israel's relentless expansion into Palestinian territories cannot be stopped, then the Palestinian presence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem will remain in a permanent and ever-more formalised 'Bantustan' status – islands of minimal self-governance with the continued denial of basic rights, perpetual insecurity and threatened physical removal.

In April 2014, US secretary of state John Kerry warned that Israel risked becoming an 'apartheid state' if it failed to conclude a historic peace deal with the Palestinians. It did not – and the plight of the Palestinians has since deteriorated even more dramatically.

On the other hand, Hamas is its own worst enemy. And the Palestinian Authority – riddled with corruption, with a president who has not been reelected for many years and tolerates continued Israeli expansionism – acts with increasing authoritarianism and suppresses dissent and hardly invites confidence either.

Yet the international community has also got it badly wrong since 2006, by pillorying instead of engaging with Hamas, making things worse rather than better. Recently, even Tony Blair has acknowledged that it was wrong to boycott Hamas after their 2006 election win.

The anti-apartheid struggle was won partly because Nelson Mandela's African National Congress spoke with authority for the cause, embraced allies on a broad basis – from liberals to communists, from churches to trade unionists – and offered a united front. The very opposite is true of the Palestinians, divided amongst themselves, with Hamas prone to Islamic extremism and to attacks on Israeli civilians – and a Palestinian Authority lacking credibility, neither achieving any progress.

As for international efforts to promote peace, initiatives have come and gone, and violence has returned to fill the vacuum. Fly-in, fly-out diplomacy has failed. Periodic engagement has led to false starts and dashed hopes. International forces have not been aligned and dialogue has been stunted.

But Hamas and Israel cannot militarily defeat the other; they will both have to be party to a negotiated solution which satisfies Palestinian aspirations for a viable state and Israel's need for security.

The inescapable lessons from Northern Ireland and South Africa are that deep conflicts will never be resolved through violence, fundamentalism, sectarianism or a refusal to talk to enemies. Either side may have temporary advances. But the solution in the end has to be political, and the mechanism has to be negotiation.

And both those conflicts were at least as deep, if not more so, than the divide between Israelis and Palestinians. Relative peace and democracy in South Africa and Northern Ireland is today taken for granted. In fact the anti-apartheid struggle took most of the hundred years of the African National Congress' life, with the roots of apartheid going back even further to colonialism. On the island of Ireland, eight centuries of Anglo-Irish history, sharpened by violent conflict, created virulent and seemingly irreconcilable fault lines. Such lessons must also inform Labour's future agenda on justice for the Palestinians and security for Israelis. ■

The right trade-offs

The government has wasted a historic opportunity to build its post-Brexit trade deals around modern values. Labour would do things differently, argues *Emily Thornberry MP*



Emily Thornberry is the Labour MP for Islington South and Finsbury and Shadow Secretary of State for International Trade

GIVEN THE INCREASINGLY obvious and varied failures of the government's Brexit deal, and its senseless, stubborn refusal to address them, it is easy to forget all the other trade deals it botched just as badly last year. And there were many of them.

Last year, more than three-quarters of the trade agreements notified to the World Trade Organization had a British signature on the bottom, most agreed in a late rush as the government moved to roll over our existing trade deals with dozens of non-EU states beyond Brexit, while engaging in self-destructive, time-wasting brinkmanship over the big one with Europe itself.

As a result of that flurry of UK activity, the WTO received 59 notifications of trade agreements in 2020. In the organisation's entire history, the previous biggest total was 37.

This illustrates the fact that what took place last year was not just a significant moment in the UK's trade history, but a major event for the world: the only time in living memory when one of the wealthy nations has had the chance to rebuild all its existing trade relationships from scratch.

With all those deals to roll over, and many other brand new ones to negotiate, our government had an unprecedented chance from 2016 onwards to show the rest of the world what a new generation of trade agreements could look like.

From climate change to forced labour, it also had the opportunity – and I would argue the moral obligation – to demonstrate the difference that a trade policy shaped around modern concerns could make.

However, with depressing predictability, Boris Johnson's government has utterly wasted that historic opportunity, just as surely as it has made a mess of Brexit. It has given the WTO dozens of fresh trade agreements to file in its records, but not a single new lesson to learn.

And yet that is not because international trade secretary Liz Truss and her colleagues have lacked a strategy for this period. Indeed, the government's strategy has been alarmingly basic and clear.

The goal, as published in the 2019 Conservative manifesto, is that – by the end of 2022 – 80 per cent of UK trade should be covered by free trade agreements. And its plan to achieve that has simply been to sign as many trade deals as possible, as quickly as possible, covering as many countries as possible, and to treat any obstacles they encounter with total disdain.

From its resistance to effective parliamentary scrutiny of trade deals to its refusal to invest time agreeing new chapters on environmental cooperation, the only consistent theme of the government's approach has been the desire to get deals done without delays or distractions.

And why? Because these agreements have become, in their minds, a way to justify the historic leap of faith at the heart of their Brexit settlement. The gains from trading freely with the rest of the world, our government insist, will eventually outweigh the losses from damaging our trade with Europe.

The more the evidence mounts of those losses, the more desperately it needs some promise of the gains, even if that simply comes in the shape of more handshakes, more signing ceremonies, and more agreements in principle.

But there are three fundamental flaws in that strategy.

First, the numbers just do not add up. The deals the government is doing cannot deliver the size of gains required to make up for our lost trade with Europe.

Take accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), the current central goal of UK trade policy. Vast amounts of energy are being committed to joining the CPTPP, and yet, according to the government's own forecasts, doing so will produce



just a £3.3bn increase in UK imports and exports, around a third of our annual trade with Luxembourg.

Worse still, the vast majority of that increase depends on Malaysia deciding to proceed with CPTPP ratification, given they are one of only two potential members with whom we do not already have bilateral trade deals agreed or in the pipeline.

Second, the speed at which the government is seeking these new deals is entirely self-defeating when it comes to increasing the gains they produce. Again, take the CPTPP. The agreement as it stands does little to boost trade in financial services and other professional services, vital growth industries for the UK economy. It has no bespoke provisions to support trade in environmental goods and technology; educational services; engineering and construction; tourism, culture and recreation; or numerous other sectors where the UK has huge export potential but which the current agreement does nothing to support.

You would think therefore that the government would be going into its negotiations on CPTPP accession with a vast wishlist of proposed improvements to the agreement, enough to raise that forecast £3.3bn of increased trade into something much more lucrative.

But no, Liz Truss does not intend to seek a single change which might better serve the interests of UK exporters. The hope of a quick deal on accession has trumped everything else.

Third and most painful, the rest of the world sees a British government rushing around looking for trade deals to sign, and is understandably exploiting our desperation.

Australia agreed a deal in June widely described as the best in its history; New Zealand has hurried to secure

the same terms; both countries achieving unprecedented access for their agricultural exports and giving away nothing meaningful in return.

When challenged about this, Truss and her allies fall back on a deeply worrying line of defence: “If we can’t do deals like this,” they say, “what was the point of leaving the EU?”

So while every other government in the world looks at proposed trade deals, and asks objectively: “What are the benefits for our country?” our government alone is asking a different question: “What does this say about Brexit?”

And if they are rushing into trade deals not because it is the right thing for our economy but because they need to show politically that Brexit is working, then that is deeply dangerous. Put crudely, it allows other countries to play us for suckers.

So what should the government do differently? Or more to the point, what would a Labour trade policy look like instead?

Most importantly, we need to focus the bulk of our energy and resources on the areas of trade where we can make the biggest immediate difference to jobs and growth here in the UK.

As things stand, that must mean – above all other priorities – fixing the holes in the UK’s deal with Europe, to make it easier for all of our exporters to sell their goods and services to our biggest trading partner, from financial services to fish.

None of that will make for exciting headlines – going over old ground and fixing past mistakes never does – but in terms of increasing UK exports and growth, it would dwarf what is achieved in the next year through trade deals with Australia and New Zealand, or through joining the CPTPP.

Next, when it comes to those new trade deals, and others we are seeking to negotiate around the world, we need to set our sights much higher in terms of pushing British interests: maximising the potential of each deal to generate business opportunities abroad and create jobs at home, and doing so in the sectors that offer the greatest scope for sustained growth.

On top of that, we must also seek to use each deal to promote British standards, from workers’ rights to animal welfare; to advocate British values, from social justice to human rights; and to further international cooperation to tackle the climate crisis.

That will all take more time than the government’s current deals, and will require a degree of ambition and strength in our negotiating stance that is entirely missing at present. Some of the countries queuing up to play Britain for suckers will doubtless end up walking away because our demands are too tough, and our standards too high.

But that will be a small price to pay to achieve trade agreements elsewhere which are properly tailored to the needs of our economy, and which will make British trade a genuine force for good in the world. That opportunity has been five decades in the making, and it will be a crying shame if the Tories continue to waste it all. ■

We need to set our sights much higher in terms of pushing British interests

A real alternative

We must let people glimpse a future in which the places where they live have a renewed purpose, argues *Luke Raikes*



Luke Raikes is research director at the Fabian Society

NOT FOR THE first time, Labour risks underestimating Boris Johnson. If all goes to plan, the prime minister's 'levelling up' agenda will do exactly what he wants it to: it will help him hold on to the seats he won at the 2019 election and may even win him some more, just like Hartlepool. That is why Labour must develop a real alternative.

When Johnson talks about levelling up, he tells a compelling story. It is a story about the past, present and future of the places which recently backed him. Stick with him and he will deliver new purpose to written-off towns and new meaning to people's lives, so the story goes.

The last Labour government and Labour town halls are the villains of Johnson's story (alongside the EU of course). According to this narrative, Labour took these places for granted, Labour town halls are corrupt and incompetent, and the last Labour government let them down. Like all powerful lies, it has a small, hard-to-hear truth at its core – Labour was undoing Thatcher's terrible legacy, but was overreliant on the City and should have devolved more power to the regions.

Johnson's policies will not actually work, but that won't matter to him. At the next election, people will only see small improvements, but they will show his intent, and people know it takes time to turn places around. And even in the long-term, when Johnson's underfunded and poorly conceived agenda ultimately fails, disillusioned people won't rush toward Labour: as we should have learned by now, politics does not work like that.

In response to 'levelling up', Labour cannot be negative, but nor can it bow out. The sight of Labour carping from the sidelines and willing this agenda to fail will see the party punished at the ballot box. Labour's response to George Osborne's northern powerhouse agenda too often smacked of tribalism and entitlement. But nor can Labour keep quiet, and cross its fingers that the election takes place on the terms it wants, like '24 hours to save the NHS' (again).

So Labour must compete: it must set out a different, realistic, but optimistic plan which shows how every town,

city, region and nation can find new purpose in a future British economy. There are three priorities for Labour to move this forward.

First, Labour must get a firm grip on the relationship between local economic growth, globalisation, living standards and climate change. In recent years, Labour has spent a lot of time discussing alternative economic development agendas, such as de-growth, wellbeing and 'community wealth building'. There are some interesting initiatives. But there is little that's actually new or revolutionary.

And too often, it has been a distraction from the main challenge: to make economic growth and globalisation work for people, while reducing emissions. At the moment, productivity is far too weak in many places; where it is strong, it does not translate into good jobs and living standards. Globalisation often means asset stripping and beauty contests for fickle foreign investment; commitments to a 'just transition' remain vague; and it will be a long, uphill struggle to turn economies around. The real-life consequences of badly functioning economies are profound, in terms of poverty and health. But these challenges need facing, not re-conceptualising with another flow-chart. Labour should look at countries like Germany and France to develop real, often devolved, industrial and regional policies that are interventionist, well-funded and comprehensive.

Second, Labour must understand how different sectors work together within a place. The party is right to focus on improving the quality of work and productivity in high-employment sectors such as retail and hospitality, in the widely-discussed 'long tail' of low-productivity firms, in the 'everyday', or foundational, economy. But on its own, this does not translate into an agenda which is either politically advantageous nor economically sound. Politically, Labour must understand that while workers in everyday economy sectors want better pay and conditions, they also want the place they live in to have a purpose. And in reality, ramping up productivity in everyday economy sectors in isolation is incredibly challenging – it isn't enough to

Labour must understand how different towns and cities can work together

just say ‘increase skills supply and improve management practices’ when we can not dictate to the local café how to run their business.

Sectors are interconnected and so tradeable sectors like high-tech manufacturing, digital or business services can, in the right hands, help local economies to grow inclusively. They can bring good jobs and investment and they can purchase local goods and services directly or via their staff and suppliers. They can also give places a much-needed sense of purpose. These sectors can succeed – they already are in some parts of the UK, but other European countries tend to be better at making them work. Labour needs policies that will support these sectors and harness their benefits – not rely on them trickling down. Clearly, not every town can be home to these tradeable sectors, and that is where geographical scale becomes vital.

And so third, Labour must get a grip on geographical scale – how towns and cities work together within a regional economy. Towns are Labour’s political priority: 75 of Labour’s 150 potential target seats are towns that aren’t part of a larger conurbation.

For some people, towns are a byword for decline – but actually, many towns thrive. Towns – and villages and smaller cities – are doing well not just in the south of England, but in the North and Midlands too. Cheshire is the most productive part of the North, Lancashire’s productivity trend is one of the strongest in the country. The theory that cities are inherently more productive is limited at best – so-called economies of agglomeration are only a part of the picture on regional growth, and only sectors like digital and finance seem to benefit from the supposed magic of urban density.

To bring those towns which are struggling up to speed, Labour must understand how different towns and cities can work together at the regional scale. If we only think of towns and cities as if they are disconnected islands, we will struggle to break free from their constraints. As noted above, not every town will be home to high-growth sectors. But they can still have a purpose within a wider region, sometimes as nice places to live for people working close by. This is especially true in the North: it has clusters of cities,

towns and villages which are quite close to each other, and set up to benefit from being a ‘polycentric’ region. In other countries, like Germany and the Netherlands, this configuration lets towns and cities differentiate and complement one-another. But here, they aren’t so well connected, and in that isolation they currently stagnate.

Labour must translate these three priorities into a realistic but optimistic plan for the whole country. It should not push a ‘green industrial revolution’ on places which have learnt to be sceptical of politicians’ grand visions – and people who are wary of any kind of ‘revolution’. But Labour should set out a firm, realistic plan. Then it can test Johnson’s record against Labour’s plan, not his vague promises.

Labour can even show evidence of that plan in action. Because the good news is, it does not have to talk in hypotheticals or start from a blank sheet of paper. The party now has eight regional mayors, who govern conurbations encompassing towns and cities across the whole country, and who work together across regions, like in the North. These are people who have the evidence, and on-the-ground understanding of how these places work – and understand how to win elections on the back of it too. They combine the advantages of incumbency with those of opposition. Labour needs to make much more use of them.

We could be halfway through this parliament if, as expected, an election is called in spring 2023. Come that election, Johnson won’t need to ask us to imagine ‘leveling up’: he will be able to show it slowly coming to life, in the giga-factories and offshore wind farms of the North and Midlands. All happening under a Tory government. That is the story he wants to tell.

So, Labour must tell its own story, set out its own plan and show how that is already being delivered by Labour mayors across the country.

In last year’s Labour Connected speech, Keir Starmer said: “What we say at the next general election... will sound like the future arriving.” People in towns, cities, regions and nations across the country will need to see themselves in that future. That vision should be at the heart of Labour’s economic policy. **F**



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All in

The global recovery from Covid-19 must be disability-inclusive.
It is time for the left to work with disabled people, putting
us at the heart of their plans, writes *Vera Kubenz*



*Vera Kubenz is a research fellow
in the School of Education at the
University of Birmingham*

IF THE COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything about disability, it is that we are not “all in this together”. Disabled people accounted for 60 per cent of Covid-related deaths in the UK up until February 2021, according to the Office of National Statistics. While some of these deaths might have been due to underlying conditions which put older and disabled people at greater risk, analysis by the ONS suggests that a significant part of this is due to the disproportionate disadvantage faced by disabled people across society.

This finding will come as little surprise to anyone who has followed disability issues across the pandemic, as it has become clear that disabled people have at best been an afterthought in the government’s pandemic planning. Disabled people have had to fight for access and against discrimination at every corner, as illustrated by the recent successful case won by a deaf woman against the government which breached its legal obligation to make its briefings accessible through sign language interpretation. Disabled activists have also had to battle against the Coronavirus Act, which removed safeguarding processes to make it easier to detain people under the Mental Health Act; NICE guidelines based on the clinical frailty scale which excluded otherwise healthy disabled people from intensive care based on biased assumptions about their quality of life; and vaccination guidelines that initially did not prioritise many disabled people, in particular those with learning disabilities.

While all of these policies were eventually overturned, this came at a cost for many disabled people, exacerbating the anxiety that if we were to need hospital treatment after catching Covid-19, then not all efforts would be made to save our lives. This was confirmed by reports that some medical practices were applying ‘do not resuscitate’ orders to patients without their knowledge and consent, again targeting particularly people with learning disabilities. The situation was particularly dire for older and disabled people who live in care or residential homes, with a 46 per cent increase in deaths during the first wave of the pandemic. Lack of PPE for staff and residents, inadequate access to testing and vaccinations and strict national and local policies restricting visitor access violated the rights of care home residents in England, according to Amnesty International.

For disabled people in the community, social care support was often reduced to nothing overnight, with care packages being replaced with one phone call a week, undermining independent living and autonomy. Many disabled people also struggled to access essential items, due to food shortages caused by panic buying, difficulties accessing delivery slots for groceries, and limited public transport options.

Disabled people in work are more likely to be in front-line or precarious work, and many experienced financial difficulties as a result of the lockdown. This was again exacerbated by policies which provided inadequate protection, for example by ‘recommending’ furlough for those shielding rather than mandating it, which led to some employers telling shielders to claim statutory sick pay instead. While the move to remote working, which was previously often denied to many disabled and non-disabled people, opened up opportunities for some, the move to online also presented new challenges to many, due to platforms which were not designed with accessibility in mind, and disabled people making up 56 per cent of non-internet users.

Many of the issues faced by disabled people in the UK and other rich countries are also experienced by disabled people in other countries, including access to food, education, employment, and discriminatory attitudes in healthcare. However, in many low and middle-income countries, these are often compounded by poverty, poor infrastructure, and significant stigma and discrimination which persist as the legacy of colonialism, despite the widespread ratification of the Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Disability and poverty are increasingly linked, and Covid-19 is likely to be the most significant setback for global poverty reduction efforts in the last few decades.

During the first wave of the pandemic, hunger was a more significant threat than Covid-19 to many disabled people in low and middle-income countries, where people typically suffered from a lack of access to social protection, with relief programmes that were often inadequate, poorly designed and – at worst – actively excluded those already in receipt of disability benefits. Healthcare remains unaffordable for many in these regions, and beds and toilets in quarantine centres were often inaccessible for disabled people. In one



© Jeremy Stewardson

international survey, 52 per cent of participants stated that they were denied or deprived of access to treatment, including reports of sign language interpreters refusing to attend hospital appointments, and an autistic child being denied a Covid-19 test as he was “too difficult to assess”. One of the most shocking examples of neglect during the pandemic is that of 16-year-old Yan Cheng from China, who received no alternative care from the government after his father and sole carer were forcibly quarantined.

The pandemic has exposed that our approaches to global development are unsustainable. The current focus on ‘quick fixes’, providing time-limited funding for specific projects in a single sector, often does little to address the larger systemic issues, leading to a lack of resilience and fragmented infrastructure that is unable to stand up to crises such as a pandemic. Development initiatives can often perpetuate disabling conditions, by reducing disability to an economic issue or labelling disabled people as ‘vulnerable’ without interrogating the causes of this vulnerability. Images of disabled people continue to be used frequently as symbols of poverty and humanitarian crisis, evoking harmful ideas of disabled people as objects of charity and pity. Despite this, most development initiatives do not take disability into account, with only 5 per cent of direct overseas aid dedicated to disability programmes. And the government official development assistance cuts are likely to exacerbate the challenge to ensure a disability-inclusive recovery from Covid-19 which ‘builds back better’ by creating resilience for the future.

While all these facts paint a very bleak picture, it is important to recognise the resilience of disabled people and our allies. Disabled people’s organisations across the globe were often instrumental both in holding governments to account and providing concrete support to disabled people on the ground. Trade unions have stepped in supporting disabled people facing difficulties in the workplace, for example those who felt forced to return to potentially unsafe workplaces by their employers, and more recently, the Trades Union Congress has called on the government to provide greater legal protection to those with long Covid by including it in the Equality

Act as a condition that is automatically recognised as an impairment. It is now time for the left to build on these efforts and work with disabled people’s organisations to ensure that the recovery from Covid-19 across the world is disability-inclusive.

In the UK, the current easing in restrictions is leading to further exclusion for many, including those who are unable to be vaccinated due to health reasons or are still at higher risk despite vaccination. And many fear that ‘going back to normal’ will remove some of the progress made during the pandemic, such as access to remote working, telehealth, and online events, and may actually cause a reversal in disability rights. Many disabled people have already shared evidence of barriers such as pavement and accessible parking bays being blocked due to enable social distancing, and some have experienced Covid-19 safety measures being used as a reason to deny disabled people access for ‘health and safety’ reasons.

It is also crucial that we recognise that the pandemic is far from over for many across the globe, and will not be until everyone, including in poor countries, has access to vaccination. We have a collective responsibility to ensure that all of those most at risk are able to get vaccinated, through sharing adequate supplies with low-income countries. It is crucial for us to listen and engage with reports from disabled people in low and middle income countries, such as the International Disability Alliance’s “Voices of People with Disabilities During the Covid-19 Outbreak” series, to understand the diverse issues they have faced during the pandemic and what we can learn about activism and positive change from their experiences.

As we continue to adapt to living during the pandemic and its aftermath, it is crucial that activists and policy-makers on the left continue to put disability issues at the heart of their actions. This means including ongoing dialogue with disabled people and including disabled voices in all decision-making, in the spirit of the global disability rights motto “nothing about us without us”. Rather than going ‘back to normal’, we should make efforts to learn lessons from the pandemic on how our society needs to change to be more fair, accessible, and sustainable for all of us. ■

Books

Baggage included

A new biography of the Labour leader comes with its own agenda, finds *Eunice Goes*



Eunice Goes is professor of politics at Richmond University and author of The Labour Party Under Ed Miliband: Trying But Failing to Renew Social Democracy

Michael Ashcroft's biography of Keir Starmer reveals far more about the author's conservative political leanings (and social prejudices) than about the subject. Most of the claims made about Keir Starmer's family background, education, opinions and professional trajectory made in this 'unauthorised' biography were already in the public domain and are not based on undisputed facts but on the opinions of individuals who have met, however fleetingly, the Labour leader. In the end, *Red Knight* portrays the Labour leader as an intelligent, serious, principled and ambitious man, who is devoted to his family, and whose major flaws are a supposed lack of charisma, a penchant to exaggerate his working-class origins and his socialist views.

Throughout *Red Knight*, the far-from-neutral author shows his annoyance at Starmer's alleged over-egged claims about his working-class origins. According to Lord Ashcroft, Starmer's father led a 'more middle-class existence'. As he puts it "as a skilled manual worker who was self-employed and who owned a house (albeit with a mortgage), it is certainly arguable that Rodney Starmer would be thought of by some social scientists as being a cut above other toolmakers who did work in factories for other people".

But the Conservative peer's claim that Starmer's father was 'petit bourgeois' is somewhat shaky especially because he never defines this slippery concept. More importantly, Ashcroft's account of Starmer's family background and life does not reflect a 'petit bourgeois' lifestyle. Sources quoted in *Red Knight* describe the Starmer's family home house as 'very modest'. Starmer went to Reigate Grammar School, which became a fee-paying school for most of the time he was a pupil there, but, as Ashcroft admits, the Labour leader attended the school free of charge. Finally, Starmer's gap year was very far from those enjoyed by middle-class youngsters. Instead of backpacking around Asia and



Michael Ashcroft
Red Knight: The Unauthorised Biography of Sir Keir Starmer
by Michael Ashcroft
(Biteback Publishing, £20)

South America, Starmer spent his time before university working as a volunteer in a home for the disabled in Cornwall and helping his father in his toolmaking factory. In short, if the Labour leader is now a member of the 'establishment' he arrived there by following a very different (and far more spartan) trajectory than, say, the current prime minister Boris Johnson.

Red Knight also questions the presumed 'stellar' legal career of the Labour leader. Ashcroft's account portrays the Labour leader as someone who was very good at preparing detailed legal briefs but who, according to sources interviewed for the book, tended to be the 'junior counsel rather than the advocate on his feet' because he had "no orator's ability to use emotion or humour" and was 'dull as hell'. The implications of these opinionated claims are clear though not necessarily a revelation for anyone who follows British politics: Starmer, so the story goes, does not have the rhetorical and presentational skills to be an inspiring leader of the opposition.

The Conservative peer also shows how he disapproves of Starmer's socialist values. His support for trade unions, his progressive ideas about prisons and access to justice, his commitment to gender and racial equality, his younger writings on eco-socialism and even his views on the right to a fair trial (Ashcroft goes on about some of the unsavoury characters the Labour leader represented in court) are presented as juvenile and in some instances unacceptable ideas to be held by someone who wants to become Britain's next prime minister. But despite this assessment, Ashcroft ends up encouraging Starmer to be himself even if what comes to the fore is the 'radical left-wing lawyer of old' because, given his current disappointing standing in the opinion polls, he 'has nothing to lose'. Time will soon tell whether this was well-meant advice. **F**

Labour pangs

Harry Taylor shines a light on a dramatic period in Labour and Fabian history



Harry Taylor is the author of Victor Grayson: In Search of Britain's Lost Revolutionary published by Pluto

IT IS NOW a little over a century since the infamous socialist MP, Victor Grayson, left his London apartment and disappeared forever. But there is more to Grayson's story than this enduring mystery, for his political life, though brief, represented a mortal threat to the nascent Labour Party. The Fabian Society was drawn into this struggle and played a key role in the rejection of Grayson's revolutionary approach.

The Colne Valley by-election of 1907 saw Victor Grayson achieve what political experts deemed impossible: to win a three-cornered contest against a Liberal and a Conservative. Until then, Labour candidates could only win when Liberals stood aside – not overturn them in Liberal strongholds like Colne Valley. A bungled selection process meant that Grayson faced the additional setback of not being the official Labour candidate, so he fought as Labour & Socialist. He ran a fierce campaign with a message that fused the language of the Bible with his socialist vision. It was a victory, he told the press, 'for pure revolutionary socialism'.

The years leading up to Grayson's election saw growing frustration amongst socialists that conservative trade union leaders were stifling the election of a socialist government to transform society. The Fabian Society was not immune and serious discussions took place as to whether it should remain a pressure group or develop into a specifically socialist party. The Fabians had traditionally been seen as holding a policy of 'permeating the Liberal Party' to push it towards radical solutions to alleviate want. It is telling that Grayson had once been a Fabian, but now thoroughly rejected their methods. Even the likes of Shaw were beginning to question their approach. The Fabians, Shaw publicly lamented, had spent 20 years "proposing urgently needed measures in a strictly constitutional way" but the result was that "more attention is paid to mobs that break windows ... than to us". No wonder then, that there were growing calls for not only the abandonment of this strategy and a break with the Labour party to form an avowedly socialist party.

The Colne Valley result sent these demands into overdrive, nowhere more so than in the pages of the now little-remembered New Age magazine. The New Age was purchased as a left-leaning journal with a dwindling circulation by Alfred Orage and Holbrook Jackson in May 1907. Jackson was an active and committed Fabian

and persuaded George Bernard Shaw to contribute funds for the purchase. Shaw became a regular contributor, as did the Webbs and H. G. Wells, so much so that the magazine was regarded as an unofficial organ of the Fabian Society. In the wake of Grayson's election, Wells wrote in New Age to condemn the idea of founding a new socialist party. Socialism, he thought, was more a state of mind than a political movement, and should be left to conceive a higher form of civilisation, not lower itself to fight party political battles. Orage (editor and co-owner with Jackson) responded in agreement and reasoned that a socialist party, when the idea of socialism was still so 'multiform and variegated', would hinder its development and thus prevent the emergence of 'the higher and as yet unformulated socialism'.

But Orage and cooler Fabian heads were about to change their tune. Grayson was expelled from the Commons for trying to raise the issue of unemployment against the permitted running order of business for two days running. It turned him into a popular hero outside of Westminster and he toured the country calling for a new socialist party to be formed. Bernard Shaw wrote at length in the pages of the New Age in support of Grayson whilst Orage quipped that Fabianism 'might be magnificent but it wasn't socialism'. Orage now wrote to Wells stating his belief that the biggest obstacle to the success of socialism was the belief among the middle classes that it was 'bound up with trade unionism' and their fear that socialism meant 'government by trade union officials'. The work of the Fabians, Orage told Wells, was now over and it must throw in its lot with the formation of a new socialist party.

Another Fabian contributor to the New Age and close associate of Grayson, Sam Hobson, a Fabian Executive member since 1900, called for socialist representation committees to be formed across the country. But Hobson failed to persuade the Fabians to disaffiliate from Labour and back the socialist representation committees. Despite a few initial wobbles, the Fabian leaders rallied to defend the Labour party. Shaw and Sidney Webb led the criticism of Hobson's plan whilst Holbrook Jackson quit New Age when Orage appointed Grayson as the magazine's political editor. Orage had failed to take the Fabians with him and they in turn set up the New Statesman in 1913 which definitely ended any lingering support of the Fabians for the New Age. ■

Towering figure

Dick Leonard played a key role in the story of the Fabian Society, including setting up the Young Fabians, writes his son *Mark Leonard*

DICK LEONARD, a former MP, journalist, historian, psephologist and assistant general secretary and chair of the Fabian Society died on June 24 at the age of 90.

Dick began supporting the Labour party in the 1945 general election and was the youngest parliamentary candidate in the 1955 election. In the same year, he was recruited to the Fabian Society as assistant general secretary by a panel that included GDH and Margaret Cole, Harold Laski and Harold Wilson. Whilst at the Fabians, he set up the Young Fabians and was also active in furthering the aims of the Fabian Colonial Bureau. He encountered many of the great people who built the labour movement and the modern welfare state – Attlee, Bevan, Gaitskell, Morrison – and had personal relationships with many figures of the next generation such as Roy Jenkins,

Dennis Healey and above all Tony Crosland, who became his mentor.

It was at a Fabian summer school in Oxford in the summer of 1960, at the end of his tenure at the society, that he met a 16-year-old Irène Heidelberger on the croquet lawn. She had been brought along by her socialist mother in the hope of improving her English. This improbable encounter was the defining relationship of his life and led to an inspiring marriage in 1963 that flourished until the end of his life.

Dick was an early champion of the importance of opinion polls – and masterminded televised election coverage for the BBC in the 1964 and 1966 elections – complete with an early black and white swingometer.

A central theme in Dick's life was Britain's troubled relationship with Europe. As a new MP whose parliamentary seat was redrawn in a boundary review, he made the life-changing decision to vote against the Labour party whip in the 1971 votes on joining the European Community, joining forces with 68 other Labour rebels who were led by Roy Jenkins. He lost his seat in 1974 but he never gave up his political convictions and remained close to the big stories of the age.

After losing his seat, Dick reinvented himself as a journalist, becoming assistant editor of the *Economist* and serving as its Brussels correspondent from 1980 where he wrote the definitive guide to the EU

which remains in print and is now entering its 12th edition.

In 2009, following the birth of his first grandson Jakob – and Irène's retirement from her university job in Brussels – Dick returned to London where he reinvented himself once again as a historian. In this capacity he wrote and co-authored a number of books on contemporary and historical British politics, particularly focusing on Britain's prime ministers. The final volume of his 1,000 page study of British prime ministers was completed just a few weeks before his death and will be published this autumn.

Back in London, he involved himself in Labour politics again and was particularly invested in the election of Keir Starmer, who not only became a trusted friend – Keir visited him a few days before his death – but reinforced his faith that a better world was still possible. Dick was also a constant support to his wife and children and was a devoted grandfather to Jakob, Noa and Isaac. ■

• A fuller version of this obituary is available online at www.markleonard.net/dickleonard. Dick Leonard book's 'Modern British Prime Ministers: from Balfour to Johnson' is published by Routledge on 30 November 2021.

Mark Leonard, the son of Dick Leonard, is co-founder and director of the European Council on Foreign Relations

NOTICEBOARD

FABIAN NORTHERN CONFERENCE and AGM

Speakers include shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves MP and Tracy Brabin, mayor of West Yorkshire
Saturday 13 November,
11.30am–4.30pm, The Queens Hotel,
City Square, Leeds LS1 1PJ.
Includes a short AGM starting at 3.30pm.
Hybrid event: online access available for members unable to attend in person.

AGM business

Apologies
Minutes of the 2020 AGM
Matters arising
In memoriam
Chair's report
General secretary's report

Reports from Fabian sections
Treasurer's report
Approval of annual report 2020/21
Appointment of auditors
Motions
Jenny Jeger prize for writing
Date of next AGM
Any other business

More details will be available on the Fabian Society website: www.fabians.org.uk

AGM Motion

Rule change proposed by the executive committee:

Rule 12 – Replace the number 28 with 14 and the number 56 with 28 in the following sentence:

'All votes must be cast within a period to be determined by the executive committee, which shall be not less than 28 days and not more than 56 days after the day the ballot opens.'

ELECTIONS

The online ballot for the Fabian Society executive committee opens on 24 September and runs to 29 October. Ballot details will be sent out by email (or by post for members for whom we do not have an email address). All members with voting rights will receive an EC ballot and members eligible to vote in Young Fabians and Fabian Women's Network elections will also receive ballots for these. Queries should be sent to membership@fabians.org.uk.

Listings

ANNOUNCEMENT

Fabian Society events

Many Fabian Society events are still being held online. Keep an eye on our website for news of up-to-date activities and contact your local society for ways to stay involved.

BIRMINGHAM & WEST MIDLANDS

Contact Luke John Davies at
bhamfabians@gmail.com

BOURNEMOUTH & DISTRICT

Contact Ian Taylor, 01202 396634
or taylorbournemouth@gmail.com
for details

BRIGHTON & HOVE

Contact Stephen Ottaway at
stephenottaway1@gmail.com
for details

CENTRAL LONDON

Contact Michael Weatherburn
at londonfabians@gmail.com and
website [https://fabians.org.uk/
central-london-fabian-society](https://fabians.org.uk/central-london-fabian-society)

CHISWICK & WEST LONDON

Contact Alison Baker at
a.m.baker@blueyonder.co.uk

COLCHESTER

Contact Maurice Austin at
Maurice.austin@phonecoop.coop

COUNTY DURHAM

Contact Professor Alan Townsend,
01388 746479

CROYDON & SUTTON

Contact Emily Brothers
at info@emilybrothers.com

ENFIELD FABIANS

Contact Andrew Gilbert
at enfieldfabians@gmail.com

FINCHLEY

Contact Sam Jacobs at
Sam.Jacobs@netapp.com

HAVERING

Contact Davis Marshall at
haveringfabians@outlook.com

HORNSEY & WOOD GREEN

Contact Mark Cooke at
hwgfabians@gmail.com

NEWHAM

Contact Mike Reader at
mike.reader99@gmail.com

NORTHUMBRIA AREA

Contact Pat Hobson at
pathobson@hotmail.com

READING & DISTRICT

Contact Tony Skuse
at tony@skuse.net

RUGBY

Contact John Goodman at
rugbyfabians@myphone.coop

SOUTH TYNESIDE

Contact Paul Freeman at
southtynesidefabians@gmail.com

SUFFOLK

Would you like to get involved in
re-launching the Suffolk Fabian Society?
If so, please contact John Cook at
contact@ipswich-labour.org.uk

TONBRIDGE & TUNBRIDGE WELLS

Contact Martin Clay
at Martin.clay@btinternet.com

WALSALL

Contact Ian Robertson at
robertsonic@hotmail.co.uk for details

YORK & DISTRICT

Contact Jack Mason
at jm2161@york.ac.uk

FABIAN QUIZ

I EMBRACE YOU WITH ALL MY REVOLUTIONARY FERVOR

Ernesto 'Che' Guevara



Ernesto 'Che' Guevara was born into a wealthy family in Argentina in 1928 and trained as a doctor, but became radicalised

by the poverty and hunger he witnessed in South America. He played a key role in the Cuban Revolution and served in Fidel Castro's government. He then travelled to Bolivia to lead the rebellion there, where he was executed by the Bolivian and US forces in 1967.

This new selection of Che Guevara's correspondence maps the emergence of a revolutionary and original political thinker. Covering the entirety of Che's life, from his famous motorcycle journey around South America to the Cuban Revolutionary War, from the setting-up of the communist state of Cuba to his revolutionary travels to the Congo and Bolivia. But it also reveals a more intimate, personal side to Che, including his letters to his mother, wife and children.

In one of his last letters to his young children, Che advised them to 'always be capable of feeling deeply any injustice committed against anyone, anywhere in the world.'

Penguin has kindly given us five copies to give away. To win one, answer the following question:

Which former Labour prime minister died on the same day Che Guevara was arrested in Bolivia?
Please email your answer and your address to
review@fabian-society.org.uk

**ANSWERS MUST BE
RECEIVED NO LATER
THAN 19 NOVEMBER 2021**

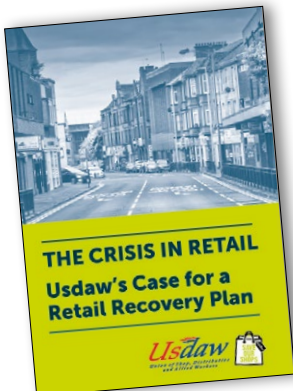


URGENT ACTION IS NEEDED TO SAVE OUR SHOPS



Usdaw is calling for:

- Economic measures to create a more level playing field between the high street and online retailing.
- Fair pay and job security for retail workers – tackle zero-hours and short-hours contracts, investment in skills and training.
- Government action to protect jobs in the retail sector. Retail jobs are real jobs – retail is a key part of the economy providing jobs and income for millions of families.



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or call **0800 030 80 30**



**General Secretary Paddy Lillis
President Jane Jones**