

FABIAN REVIEW

The quarterly magazine of the Fabian Society

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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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Feeling blue

As a new Conservative prime minister takes over, a general election may be just around the corner. The outlook is anything but certain, argues *Andrew Harrop*

IN FIVE YEARS' time, how will left-wing internationalists judge Theresa May's premiership? The outgoing prime minister's record is woeful by any normal yardstick – but what comes next could prove to be so much worse. The awkward stasis of the last three years may soon be remembered almost fondly, as the calm before the storm.

May came to office declaring she wanted to fight injustices but she is leaving with nothing to show for it, after Brexit consumed everything. To govern is to choose and she chose not to act on Britain's searing inequality and fraying public realm. Only in the dying days of her tenure did she do something truly historic and progressive, by legislating for the UK to target net zero carbon emissions.

On Brexit May was inept at every level but she did at least realise that the EU had red lines too and that no deal would endanger the union and British business. The Tories are unlearning those lessons. For a few more weeks, the Conservative party will play out its midsummer's dream, content to weave a fantasy of EU surrender or cost-free no-deal Brexit. After that, once Boris Johnson is presumably installed as prime minister, the moment of reckoning will come.

As a serial liar, Johnson may end up betraying his hard Brexiter cheerleaders. Perhaps he will U-turn, follow May and submit to the EU's terms – or just kick the can down the road once more. But Johnson is boxed in and there is every chance he will try to see through his extraordinary Halloween pledge to lead the UK over the cliff. It seems that a pure Brexit is all that matters, even if the price is a savage recession and the possible break-up of Britain. The Conservatives are no longer the party of business or the union but of English nationalism, isolationism and sovereignty without power.

Whichever path the new prime minister pursues, it is very hard to see how he will be able to secure a majority in parliament. The House of Commons is deadlocked and

is only able to say 'no' not 'yes'. That must mean the chances of a general election are rising, even though neither of the main parties really wants one. There may be no other path forward.

For the left an election could be a moment of great opportunity or grave danger. The Labour party only needs to gain a few seats to form a minority government. But in a divisive 'remain' verses 'leave' contest an extreme Johnson-led alliance of Conservatives, Brexit party and DUP could prosper too. Theresa May's failure to broker compromise has taken us to this point. Many on the left are delighted that the polarisation of Brexit politics has pushed Labour grudgingly into a pro-remain position. But it has opened up the prospect of an electoral victory for 'hard Brexit' too.

When it comes to avoiding no deal, all that matters is that Labour and the smaller pro-remain parties can muster a majority between them. From that narrow perspective, many on the left will hope to see Lib Dems or even nationalists prosper in places where they are the main challenge to the Tories. But in red-blue seats there will be highly uncertain three or four-way races. In different contests the rise of the Lib Dems and the Brexit party could end up handing victory to either Labour or the Conservatives, with small shifts in sentiment possibly having an outsized impact.

To have a chance of governing, Labour will have to hold together a fragmenting coalition of voters who have divergent views on Brexit, the Corbyn project and the party's readiness for office. But what happens next will depend as much on the Conservatives as Labour, and on what the public makes of their controversial choice for prime minister.

Politics has never been more polarised or unpredictable. But if Johnson fights and wins a hard Brexit election, we will all end up wishing for a return to the sorry days of Theresa May. **F**

Shortcuts



A JUST CAUSE

Prisoners are victims as well as perpetrators and we must stand in solidarity with them
—Sara Hyde and Paula Harriott

Britain in 2019 is full of burning injustices. Austerity has ravaged the country; the impact of the hostile environment is shameful; the universal credit wrecking ball continues to take a heavy toll; and our prisons are fuller, more violent and less effective than at any time in living memory.

We in the Labour movement stand in solidarity with those at the sharp end of injustice. We understand the systemic nature of it. We are not content to tinker at the edges but seek to change unjust structures, so that all people can thrive.

Our vision for change includes the justice system: ensuring those who need it can access legal aid, renationalising prisons and supporting the victims and witnesses of crime. But do our Labour values extend to the people incarcerated in our jails?

Poverty and inequality enable crime to thrive and drive people into the prison system.

We should be advocating for and defending the rights of those in prison understanding that most, if not all, are often simultaneously victims as well as perpetrators.

But when we look around our Fabian circles and the wider Labour movement, are people with lived experience of the criminal justice system present (other than MPs convicted of expenses fraud and driving offences)? Or are we a movement that stigmatises those convicted of offences forever and doesn't welcome them post release? Where can those in prison, without the vote, exercise their political voice? Our solidarity and sisterhood should not just encompass victims and witnesses but also stretch to the woman doing time for keeping her brother's gun in a shoebox under her bed or to the care leaver in an

abusive relationship who was driving the car in a botched kidnapping.

Many women in prison share similar backgrounds: almost a third of women have been in care, 46 per cent have been in an abusive relationship, more than half have experienced childhood abuse, 25 per cent have experienced psychosis and almost 60 per cent of women admit problematic drinking, with 52 per cent disclosing class A drug use.

Is prison the best place for these women? Labour peer Jean Corston, who led a review on vulnerable women in the prison system in 2007, was clear that it was not. Prison retraumatises and often makes matters worse for women and their children. Loss of their home, loss of their children to the care system, loss of their family support, and the lifelong consequences of a stigmatising conviction are the commonplace legacies of a spell in prison. More than 80 per cent of women are in prison for a non-violent crime, with some incarcerated for not having a TV licence or shoplifting food to feed their families. The reoffending rate varies from 30 to 64 per cent (dependent on sentence length and age group), and the National Audit Office tells us reoffending costs us between £9.5bn and £13bn a year. Prison doesn't work and is costly, in every sense. Labour needs to look afresh at sentencing and the use of prison, particularly for women. The current system is not the best

21st century feminist socialism has to offer our sisters. We could pursue Scotland's lead in following the evidence and abolishing ineffective short sentences.

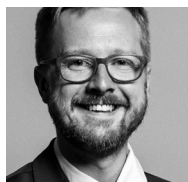
There is plenty of evidence around what works for rehabilitation: it takes time, is rooted in restorative relationships and can't always be neatly captured by the neoliberal fetish for exhaustive measurement. Effective rehabilitation works *with* people as valued citizens with agency, not on passive criminals with an immutable identity. It intervenes early with mental health and drug and alcohol use. It diverts people away from prisons which are too often schools of crime and towards more constructive support, such as community-based holistic women's centres.

Our justice system, marked by some of the greatest inequality in the UK, should be a primary concern. As Fabians, with a history rooted in pioneering policy for urgent social problems, we should help change the public narrative about prison, punishment and the true causes of crime, moving away from a fixation on Victorian notions of punishment and retribution. If we want to live up to our values of equality and solidarity, prison reform should be a priority for us all. **F**

Sara Hyde is the chair of the Fabian Women's Network and founder of the Justice Collective. Paula Harriott is the founder of the Prisoner Policy Network at Prison Reform Trust



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CUTS AND CLOSURES

The crisis in youth policy must be taken seriously
—Lloyd Russell-Moyle MP

In May, the all-party parliamentary group on youth affairs published the findings and recommendations of our inquiry into youth services, the culmination of just under a year of investigation in partnership with the National Youth Agency and the support of the British Youth Council and YMCA England and Wales. With the long-lasting and damning effects of austerity being felt throughout society, pressures on public services increasing, and opportunities for children and young people further out of reach than ever before, now is the time to refocus our efforts as a society and Labour movement on the role youth services play. They are an essential part of the fabric of our communities and help young people across the country to flourish personally and professionally.

The reality on the ground, however, is of a government that has ignored the benefits good provision for young people can bring. Funding to youth services has been cut by £1bn since 2010, with the largest cuts coming after the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition came to power in 2010.

Throughout the Tories' 'age of austerity', youth services have been hit disproportionately hard – between 2012 and 2016 alone, 600 youth centres and 139,000 individual youth service places disappeared. We are now left with highly fragmented and targeted provision. The schemes that do still exist are, of course, hugely worthwhile, but their patchy nature undermines the immense importance these services can have when delivered holistically and universally; all while a shocking 95 per cent of total government expenditure on youth services goes to David Cameron's National Citizen Service, a project that has failed to live up to its much-publicised promise.

But why are services for children and young people so important, and what would a properly funded and managed system provide? In a Britain where too many young people feel left behind, neglected, and

unable to access an ever-dwindling number of opportunities, the radical power of youth services must not be underestimated. They provide the support, foundations, and inspiration to set people up for life and change outcomes for entire communities. Much has been written about the important role of such services especially for young people from troubled backgrounds, including improving mental health, relationships and access to the jobs market and reducing crime and antisocial behaviour, but to think that these are the only benefits to society would be short-sighted. The transformative nature of youth work can allow children and young people from all backgrounds, crucially including those from deprived, maligned, or underrepresented groups, to unleash their full potential both in the present and into the future.

Our APPG report recommends a series of solutions to the current crisis in youth work. Where today we have a lack of focus and prioritisation for youth services, we call for a specific minister responsible for youth policy, accountable to parliament and the country at large. In the place of cuts and

In order to be truly effective, youth work must be approached as part of a wider ecosystem of services for children and young people

a complete lack of clarity on funding, we recommend greater investment in youth work and the reinstatement of national audits of youth services, so we know what is being spent and where. As an antidote to ambiguous and vague standards, we recommend clearly defining what the minimum levels of youth services ought to be, with a clear statutory duty and guidance on their provision.

However simply increasing funding and focus at the highest levels will not be enough. Local authorities must be empowered to enforce this statutory duty, with a lead role responsible in each authority. The evaluation and inspection of youth services must also be standardised, so we can finally put an end to the postcode lottery that leaves some communities neglected, providing a national baseline. In order to be truly effective, however, youth work must be approached as part of a wider ecosystem of services for children and young people – not delivered in isolation, as substitute, or considered an afterthought.

It is high time that we truly considered youth work as the profound influence in the lives of children and young people that it is. When properly funded, sensibly managed, and universally provided, it has the potential to give purpose in the present and hope for the future – for generations that are in desperate need today. **F**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle is the Labour and Cooperative MP for Brighton Kemptown and chair of the all-party parliamentary group on youth affairs



SECULARISM'S LAST STAND

We cannot turn a blind eye to rising intolerance in India
—Chaitanya Kumar

When Narendra Modi took the highest office in India for the first time in 2014, his electoral majority was widely considered an outlier: a freak result that was never meant to be replicated. Yet the choice of the 600 million Indians who voted in the 2019 general elections has put every psephologist and poll pundit to shame: Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have come back to power with an even bigger majority than before. His victory speech, made to the thronging thousands that chanted his name in delirium, marked the beginning of a new India. It is an India that embodies a sense of foreboding rather than hope for a divided nation.

Any post-election analysis, according to India's foremost public intellectual Pratap Bhanu Mehta, should consist of just two words – Narendra Modi. Thirty two per cent of respondents to one poll said they would not have voted for the BJP if Modi wasn't its prime ministerial candidate. During his first five-year term, Modi never gave a single press conference and every media interview was carefully scripted. His image as a strong, incorruptible and charismatic leader was assiduously crafted through a tight control of the media and the message.

The BJP has outdone all its opponents in getting its message over aggressively via social media and it has also managed to control the national conversation through



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its capture of mainstream media outlets, in a way that echoes the relationship of Fox news to the Trump administration. In fact, weeks prior to the elections, a 24-hour media channel titled NaMo started beaming his speeches and his party's activities in what can only be dubbed as blatant propaganda.

The rise of nationalism over the last decade is a global phenomenon and India is witnessing a particularly virulent form of it. What worries many is the particularly toxic brand of nationalism that Modi and his party represent, where the idea of India is seen as inextricable to Hinduism – what is largely referred in ideological terms as Hindutva – thereby leaving a large minority of Muslims, Christians and other religions facing renewed persecution.

So effective has Modi been in owning the nationalism message that it has driven his major opponents to drop, rather haplessly, any mention of the word 'secularism' in their campaign. A nation that built its constitution on the principles of secularism has, after 73 years of independence, finally decided to vote against it. The story of India as a country united in its religious diversity was one which millions of Indians grew up with. However, its peoples are now facing the real prospect of that vision being relegated to history.

So what does this mean for UK-India relations? Modi's brand image has even greater resonance with the Indian diaspora

overseas, evidenced in his ability to draw sell-out crowds at Wembley stadium and Madison Square gardens. For MPs here, for whom the diaspora is an important constituency, wooing the Indian vote has meant a reluctance to make any critical statements about Modi and his government. Human rights organisations continue to highlight the rise in communal violence but, after Brexit, the UK might have fewer tools in its diplomatic toolbox to affect political events in an equally powerful economic superpower without risking trade relations.

The left in the UK has not really painted itself in glory with some voicing support for the Modi government. Barry Gardiner, shadow international trade secretary, came in for criticism recently for a tone-deaf tweet that welcomed Modi's 'message of Indian diversity' – which is precisely what is under attack within his country.

It is vital to understand the worrying reasons that have elevated the BJP to power once more. This was an election that discarded the slogans of development and inclusive prosperity and brazenly embraced the notions of Hindu nationalism and strongman politics. The BJP's approach, whipping up jingoistic fervour to make up for the fact that the country is facing an economic slowdown with the worst unemployment numbers in 45 years and stagnating farm prices and rural wages, offers an ominous glimpse into the likely political priorities of the Modi government

for the next five years. The BJP's growing desire to annihilate any political opposition poses a real threat to a vibrant democracy.

A post-Brexit global Britain might choose to turn a blind eye to the growing levels of intolerance towards minorities and the marginalised in India for the sake of a trade deal. This would be a mistake. It should not shy away from calls to defend human rights even if it is at the expense of short-term diplomatic pain. **F**

Chaitanya Kumar is senior policy adviser at the think tank Green Alliance. He is originally from Hyderabad, India and has a keen interest in British and Indian politics



THE GOOD FIGHT

In dark times, progressive values are worth defending
—Stephanie Lloyd

It has been a rough few years for progressives. Our increasingly narrow politics and the polarisation that seems to get worse by the day often keep me up at night. For me, politics doesn't stay at the office or disappear when I log off Twitter. I believe politics is personal – and the stakes could not be higher.

I spent my adolescent years growing up under a Labour government and I watched as our country was transformed for the better. If I'm honest, it felt like progress was inevitable. The Labour government's removal of section 28 meant that I could start to learn how to be proud of my lesbian identity. The educational maintenance allowance Labour introduced meant that I didn't have to consider dropping out of school because I couldn't afford to get there. The reforms and extra spending for the NHS meant that when my dad was terminally ill, he didn't have to sit on long waiting lists, he could actually get the treatment he needed.

But if the last few years in politics have taught us anything it is that this progress is not in fact inevitable. My life and the lives of millions of others across this country changed because we won the fight to make our country better.

Right now, faced with a barrage of bad news, the easy thing to do is to wash our hands of the fight, take a back seat and tell ourselves that the passage of time will eventually bring the future that we want. But this isn't how progress works. When we take a back seat: hatred wins. The dangerous rhetoric of President Trump and his supporters becomes the new normal. The everyday racism, sexism and homophobia that would once have been outrageous become acceptable. Every time the right shifts the goalposts, and we do nothing, the powerful interests that seek to divide us win.

We live in a world where Boris Johnson is the favourite to be our next prime minister, despite the fact he has called Muslim women 'letter boxes', black people 'piccanninies' and gay men 'bumboys'. The only way to confront this is to get off the sidelines and get back to work, if not for ourselves for the people across the country who work multiple jobs and have to rely on foodbanks. They deserve better.

Our biggest challenge as progressives is to make sure we learn the lessons of our history so we can be the ones who shape the future. This starts by accepting the reality of the situation: we are not winning. Currently Labour is third in most polls, we were third in the European elections and we were second at the last general election – that is simply not good enough.

It doesn't have to be this way. Our movement has never won by harking back to the solutions of the past and indulging in nostalgia. We win when we have a truly bold vision for solving the challenges facing the country right now. We can encourage innovation in our economy, whilst ensuring the wealth and change it creates isn't hoarded but shared. We can build a new international consensus on climate change because there is no point fighting for a better world if it can't be inherited by our children. We can not only stop a hard Tory Brexit, but also start to solve the problems that led to people feeling we should turn our backs on our closest neighbours rather than work with them on our collective struggles and challenges.

I am optimistic about the future because across the country there are already people coming off the sidelines to fight, fight, and fight again for a progressive world: from the activists for a public vote on Brexit who are fighting for the future of our democracy to young people who are demanding action to tackle the climate catastrophe.

As a movement, we have allowed ourselves to be characterised as defenders of the status quo. But progressives have never been satisfied with that. We have to renew to

make sure we are ready to deliver the radical social change that will again transform our country, like it once transformed my life.

Progress isn't inevitable but neither is it impossible. Let's stop waiting for the future that we want – and start working for it. ■

Stephanie Lloyd is the interim director of Progress



MODERN HINTERLANDS

Whether they like gardening, sport or jam-making, politicians should be recognised for the real people they are—*Penny Andrews*

If there is a sight greater than that of Denis Healey riding a lawn mower around his hilly garden, I want to know about it. It is an image that fills me with such joy, and yet it never gets a mention in accounts of his rich and full life – other than the documentary for which the clip was filmed.

Healey's wife Edna is believed to be the first person to refer to a politician's interests and experiences beyond politics as their 'hinterland'. It is said she coined the term when worrying about Margaret Thatcher's seeming lack of hobbies.

Denis titled his autobiography *Time Of My Life*, in which there are photographs of him playing the piano raucously, enjoying art and literature and all the other things that made up his rare and cultured existence. Winston Churchill apparently relaxed by



© Flickr/DFID

painting and bricklaying. The racists' racist, Enoch Powell, drew admiration for his love of poetry.

Nowadays however, it seems we know less about MPs' intellectual hinterlands. Perhaps this is because the range of backgrounds and previous careers of MPs before entering politics is rather more limited than in the past, and critics often berate them for their lack of substance. But there are certain MPs whose hinterlands attract more – or less – attention – and the trends here give some insight into how we perceive and treat our politicians as well as the expectations we have of them.

It is privately-educated men who are most praised in the press for their colourful and characterful antics, with Boy's Own adventurer Rory Stewart being the current favourite. Travel books! Middle Eastern travel! On foot! Delivering his own first child! But who can forget Boris Johnson, who made his name with the general public through appearing a jolly good sport on *Have I Got News For You?* There's also Jeremy Corbyn, with his allotment and jam-making, which draw both ridicule and fondness from the media and voters alike.

Working-class male politicians are rarely thought to be so interesting; their real fondness for following football drawing less attention than the amusing sight of our leaders trying to dance or play tennis on camera. Football is not portrayed as 'real culture' in the media – perhaps because it offers a sign of life outside politics and that ever-elusive status of politicians being 'real people', rather than but a symbol at which to hurl abuse. Cynthia "Crawfie" Crawford, personal assistant to Margaret Thatcher, shared an interest in clothes and fashion magazines with her boss. Common interests termed as 'low' or 'popular' culture may not be more 'real' than classical music and poetry, but they are certainly not less real or important.

When it comes to women in the media, it appears they aren't meant to have hinterlands either, whatever their class. Nadine Dorries and Kezia Dugdale both went on *I'm A Celebrity* while sitting politicians, but neither added much to their reputation or personhood by doing so. Reality shows do not seem to add much realness.

Being noisy on social media helps somewhat – Jess Phillips has been accorded a status of 'realness' few others are lucky to receive in the current climate, especially given she is not in the cabinet or shadow cabinet, and she regularly appears in broadsheet interviews. Stella Creasy keeps her reputation as the indie-loving music

fan (even if she does like Shed Seven). The downside of a higher profile is a greater level of mistreatment. Women who pursue the same policy aim or make similar comments to male colleagues receive more direct and indirect abuse – in the form of social media posts, letters, phone calls and street harassment.

Of course, the reality of MPs' lives is such that it is difficult to have time to do much outside of politics while parliament is sitting, particularly if you have a large ministerial or select committee role. Plus, it is surely understandable that what private life you have, you would probably like to keep private. But often, MPs' non-political activities go unreported or barely noticed until after they leave politics.

The platonic political love of my life, Ed Balls, did plenty while still a minister and shadow chancellor, including learning the piano, cooking, playing cricket and football and attending concerts. However, nobody seemed to notice his 'realness' until he left politics and the public started to notice that he was not the humourless bruiser portrayed by the media, but camp and funny with knowledge and interests galore. His hinterland was always immense, but it didn't get seen until he did *Strictly Come Dancing*, as well as his documentaries and regular daytime TV appearances.

What does this mean for our politics? Do politicians have to have hobbies? If they have the time and inclination, it is up to them which of their interests, if any, they pursue while in an elected role. Disabled, single parent and chronically ill MPs are part of our reality too, and they are no lesser representatives for having reduced capacity to amuse us outside their roles. It does all MPs a disservice when they are attacked based on their voting record with no knowledge of their context, the party whip or the pairing system.

Some MPs have a fascinating backstory, whether it comes from privilege, luck or the lack of either. It should not be a problem for their policymaking if they do not. The narrative that really matters is the one they are living and working now and what they do for their constituents and the country.

We should treat all politicians as the real people they are, and the media should help us to see the light and shade of all of them. Maybe then they would be less likely to be dehumanised, abused and 'memeified' by people who disagree with their position on Brexit, Corbyn or a hundred other issues. **F**

Penny Andrews is a researcher, writer and freelance journalist



PEOPLE, NOT PROFIT

The next Labour government will put justice, solidarity and fairness into practice on a global scale

—*Dan Carden MP*

At a time when the world is at its wealthiest, yet inequality is at its highest, reshaping the UK's international development policy is vital in bringing about a fairer world. The challenges we face are vast: one in nine people across the globe still go hungry, one in five children live in conflict, 40 million people are displaced from their homes and the world is facing an ecological breakdown.

Yet at the same time, research by Oxfam has found that just 26 people now own the same wealth as half of all humanity – 3.8 billion people combined. This is symptomatic of a global economy rigged in favour of a few, concentrating power in the hands of a small number of wealthy individuals. Not only is this level of inequality morally abhorrent, but the growing gap between rich and poor actually undermines attempts to eradicate global poverty. More unequal societies also have more health and social problems and are less able to sustain economic growth.

Poverty will not be solved by philanthropy and charity. Poverty is political; poverty is structural. People are poor because there is an uneven distribution of power in the world.

Years of unfair trade deals, tax dodging and the rapacious extraction of natural resources from the world's poorest countries have resulted in a very manmade crisis. Labour's vision is to put justice, not charity, at the heart of our vision for international development.

Central to Labour's approach will be a focus on building and supporting public services in the countries where the Department for International Development (DFID) works. We know from our experiences in the UK, through the NHS and our state school system, that public services are integral to ensuring that people can realise their right to a dignified life.

Labour will establish a new unit for public services within DFID, focused on

strengthening the public sector in the countries where we work. Based on the principles of universality, accessibility and democratic accountability, financed through progressive taxation and delivered 'free at the point of use' by a skilled public workforce, public services are a powerful force for equality, social justice and economic development.

We firmly reject the Tories' approach of putting the needs of private businesses at the centre of its strategy. Our approach is to put people, not profit, first. This would mark a real break from the Tory policy of exporting the privatisation of public services through its international development strategy.

But public services are only one part of the plan. We have big ambitions for Labour's international work. Of course, DFID can't do it alone, which is why we are committed to a more coherent cross-department approach. We want to ensure that the work of one government department doesn't undermine that of another.

Where the Tories have undermined positive international development work through incoherent policies – including selling arms to the Saudi-led coalition while sending aid to Yemen – Labour will take immediate steps to ensure policy coherence with a cross-departmental approach.

In June, Labour's international development team made a joint announcement with the shadow treasury team that, when in government, we will bring in a new overseas loan transparency act to put an end to exploitative loans and to prevent a new global debt crisis.

We will ensure that our international development policies are aligned with the UK's policies on trade, tax, and foreign affairs to tackle the root causes of poverty, inequality and climate change – not just their symptoms.

And Labour will make sure all our aid spending tackles inequality by setting a twin objective for all development spending: that it should not only reduce poverty, but also reduce inequality.

Labour will develop a truly feminist development strategy that puts civil society and people from the global south front and centre of our work.

The next Labour government will use international development to put our values – of social justice, solidarity and fairness – into practice on a global scale.

If that sounds ambitious, it is. We could not be more ready. **F**

Dan Carden is the Labour MP for Liverpool Walton and the shadow international development secretary



Red and green



A climate emergency has been declared – and the next Labour government will need to take action across a number of fronts. But what should it prioritise? The Fabian Review asked parliamentarians, activists and green campaigners for their wish lists

Illustrations by Lucy Davey

THE GLOVES ARE OFF ED MILIBAND MP

ON CLIMATE CHANGE, we face the fight of our lives for the rest of our lives. This must be our fight because of the urgency of acting. Climate change is already real, here and it will hit the poorest people across the world hardest. It's time to face up to what is already happening worldwide: extreme weather patterns, cyclones, droughts, floods, deadly fires, rising sea levels. Some will be hit harder than others but no country can be insulated from the effects. Scientists tell us that the severity and frequency of these events are directly linked to human-induced climate change. If we do not act they will get far worse and the World Bank estimates that as many as 140 million people could be displaced from their homes by 2050.

So climate action is an issue of social justice, not just for the planet but for people. It must be our fight because of this but also because our principles of economic and social justice are fundamental to winning it.

The demand for 'truth telling' from Extinction Rebellion activists and the climate school strikers is right and has been a wakeup call for politicians. Labour has got the message by getting unanimous support for a non-binding motion in favour of a climate emergency declaration. It makes the British parliament the first in the world to do this. But we cannot afford to leave climate change in an 'environmental' box. Instead, tackling the climate emergency must become the central foundation for our battle to make a fairer society.

The reason is that we need to build an enduring cross-class coalition, lasting for decades. It must unite people across the country and it must inspire other countries too. The only way to do so is to show people what is in front of our eyes: tackling climate change is also a route to tackling the enormous economic and social inequalities

that divide and scar our country. This is a fact, but so far has not been central enough to the vision of those who care about this issue.

That is the inspiration and hope that the idea of the Green New Deal offers – an ambitious plan to solve the current environmental, economic and social crises in one. It envisages radically restructuring our economy and infrastructure to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss through decent work and greater ownership in green industries. It was an idea born more than a decade ago in the United Kingdom, now championed by Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in the United States, and rightly taken up by Labour for a Green New Deal and Rebecca Long-Bailey from Labour's front bench.

This green industrial revolution has the potential to transform lives, revive communities and reduce inequality across Britain. In order to help provide a blueprint for the types of economic and social transformations that need to take place, I have teamed up with the Institute for Public Policy Research for a cross-party, cross-sector, cross-generation commission. That commission will report later next year, but it is already

clear there are profound opportunities to create jobs, make the green economy central to the industrial strategy of the future and rebalance the economy of our country

As a priority, we need to retrofit and change the way we heat every building in this country and all our 27 million homes. Think of the hundreds of thousands of jobs this could create and the lower energy bills we could have for people as a result. We can only do it if the government gets with the programme and is willing to be bold. In the 1960s and 1970s we transitioned from town gas to natural gas, house by house, street by street. We need the same approach again. We must be frank and open that these kinds

This green industrial revolution has the potential to transform lives and revive communities across Britain

of transformative policies will require substantial investment but they are essential for the clean energy transition.

We need too to transform the way we travel, in particular taking 40 million petrol and diesel vehicles off our roads. That is an enormous enterprise, but again there are huge benefits if we do so in tackling the deadly killer that is air pollution. There is also a massive opportunity for our car industry in producing electric vehicles if we get in early. And there are jobs to be done transforming our towns and cities so that people can walk and cycle and get around by public transport.

There are also huge opportunities in the power sector, as we complete the low carbon transition and seek to develop new technologies like carbon capture and storage. We must also transform our land, reforesting and reclaiming peat lands. This too will provide important employment opportunities.

We should not deny that there will be challenges too. As we transition out of fossil fuels, there are huge issues that we will need to address. We know how bad it can be when transitions are not properly managed, as we saw with Tory pit closures. Only by ensuring a 'just transition', and making sure that affected workers get support, retraining and alternative employment, can we expect to bring people with us.

The same goes for the way we pay for this. As we make the transition, fairness of the burden must be an absolutely core part of the plan. That means we can't rely so heavily on paying for the transition through energy bills, as in the past. There are different ways of doing this, but whether through taxation or borrowing, or a combination of the two, it must be socially just.

This is the just the start of what is possible. The obstacles we face are not technical or statistical but about will, imagination and politics. Public opinion is moving in the right direction but the fight has only just begun to build the coalition we need. The climate change battle is one we can't duck because of the disaster that confronts the world if we do not act. But it is also an opportunity to reimagine our society and indeed our world. There is no bigger issue for our time. The Labour party can and should seize this moment. **F**

Ed Miliband is the Labour MP for Doncaster North and the former leader of the Labour party and former energy and climate change secretary

PUTTING WILDLIFE BACK ON THE MAP

STEPHANIE HILBORNE

THERE IS A growing realisation that climate change and the collapse of complex ecosystems are existential threats, not just to wildlife, but to humanity. We are, after all, part of nature not separate from it. Yet our domination as a species has disrupted a natural world that has taken millions of years to evolve.

Individuals and corporations can and should make a difference but to secure the change required, at the scale required, means governments will have to take a lead. The laws we have today are based on protecting our air, rivers, seas and land from pollution and protecting wildlife sites in our countryside and seabeds from damage. These protections are vital and should be strengthened, which is challenging in the context of Brexit. However, to achieve the huge change we really need, we must have a new generation of laws enabling the restoration of our ecosystems and climate balance.

Around the world we face a mass extinction of species. In the UK it is only partly about reduced diversity of species (biodiversity) – mostly it is about about drastic declines in abundance. Our laws must focus on reversing the catastrophic drop in numbers of birds, mammals, insects and native plants that has resulted from loss of healthy habitat. We have only remnant populations of harbour porpoise and water voles for example. This means giving more space to nature in our towns, cities, countryside and seas. As a society we need to map out where wildlife is now, and where it should be in future and plan how to achieve this – Nature Recovery Network maps and plans must be put into law and be well-funded. Targets should be set for reducing carbon emissions, for water and air quality and for the recovery of key species. Governments must be held to account by strong and genuinely independent watchdogs.

We need an ambitious Environment Act to make all of this a reality. **F**

Stephanie Hilborne is chief executive of The Wildlife Trusts

We must reverse the catastrophic drop in numbers of birds, mammals, insects and native plants



LABOUR IN POWER

ALAN WHITEHEAD MP

JEREMY CORBYN PLACED the Labour party on the right side of history when at last year's conference he announced our plans for a net zero carbon emissions economy before 2050. This means that any emissions must be balanced by absorbing an equivalent amount from the atmosphere. Theresa May nearly caught up recently with her own announcement to legislate a net zero carbon target, but with climate action slowing down can they deliver?

Labour has ambitious plans to build seven times as much offshore wind as we currently have installed and twice as much onshore wind; as energy and climate minister in a Labour government I would move quickly to ban fracking to protect communities and the environment and transition towards policies which keep fossil fuels in the ground.

I would move quickly to ban fracking and to keep fossil fuels in the ground

Rebecca Long-Bailey MP recently announced 1.75 million homes would receive solar panels starting with the poorest in society, alongside billions of pounds to insulate homes, cutting fuel poverty and household emissions. Sue Hayman MP, who first announced the environment and climate emergency would, in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, invoke policies to answer these crises.

In power, Clive Lewis MP would use his rewritten rules for the Treasury to ensure that planetary boundaries are respected in spending decisions by the highest financial institution in the land. Bill Esterson MP could refigure our export finance to stop the UK spending over 99 per cent of its budget for promoting trade on fossil fuel industries. And Barry Gardiner MP is stirring for the next iteration of the international Paris Agreement discussions to be held in the UK so that – when in power – Labour can drive an ambitious and bold climate agenda across the world, despite those visiting indignitaries who might deny it.

Therefore I would say the most beneficial act the current Tory government could make is to get out of the way. **F**

Alan Whitehead is the Labour MP for Southampton Test and shadow minister for energy and climate change

Alan Whitehead is the Labour MP for Southampton Test and shadow minister for energy and climate change

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

SUE HAYMAN MP

LAST MONTH, PARLIAMENT unanimously declared an environment and climate emergency, but the government is still not acting with the urgency required. Barriers to new onshore wind remain in place, fracking is still receiving ministerial support and the government is failing to meet almost all of its biodiversity targets. Without real action, the emergency declaration is simply empty words.

The next Labour government will act to tackle global warming, prioritise climate change adaptation, and reverse ecological decline, from introducing a ban on fracking to restoring improved support for solar, wind and tidal energy. Recent government announcements on solar panel incentives look promising, but they do not go far enough, nor do they come into force soon enough. Labour wants to see government action to push towards achieving 60 per cent of the UK's energy coming from renewable sources within 12 years, including installing solar panels onto 1.75m homes.

Tackling the emergency and achieving net zero carbon emissions by at least 2050 is also dependent on introducing carbon negative measures, such as tree-planting. The government's tree-planting scheme falls well below the scale recommended by the Committee on Climate Change. We are urging the government to increase their tree-planting goals. Additionally, we need to see an increase in funding for Natural England, the environmental regulator which has seen its independence and its budget cut dramatically since 2010.

A cross-departmental approach is vital in tackling the environment and climate emergency; environmental considerations need to be integrated with all major policy and spending decisions, especially through the Treasury. Action on housing is often overlooked, but it is needed to ensure reduced emissions and lower energy consumption, mitigating the effect of heating homes on both the climate and consumers' finances. The government needs to retrofit insulation into millions of houses, upgrading them to at least energy performance certificate band C. A zero carbon homes standard must also be introduced for new-build homes; something which was introduced by Labour but scrapped in 2015.

Parliament's emergency declaration is a clear statement of intent to act in response to the crisis and an acknowledgement that business as usual will no longer cut it. However, the government is currently more concerned with leadership elections and Brexit indecision than with the imminent threat of climate change and ecological deterioration. We will only see real action once Labour wins the next general election with the transformational approach needed to face the scale and urgency of the ecological and climate crisis. **F**

Sue Hayman is the Labour MP for Workington and shadow secretary of state for environment, food and rural affairs



TEACH THE TRUTH NOGA LEVY-RAPOPORT

FOR FAR TOO long, the national curriculum has restricted students, forcing them to concentrate on a limited range of subjects rather than truly developing their understanding of the world. This is encroaching on the right of students to view the educational framework as a place of opportunity, development, and understanding. Students must be encouraged to step out onto the streets, to look at the injustices of the world around them and rise up against it. They can only do so when they are taught, in full, about the climate crisis – the greatest threat we have ever faced. An education system that works for rather than against our future would be one that has compulsory climate emergency classes, with quantifiable activities to ensure that students grasp the ecological crisis in depth.

They should be taught not just about the impact of climate change, but about its roots as well as the action that can be taken to save our dying planet. School groups working alongside strikers and climate activists must be formed and supported by staff and students in every institution, bringing the nature of grassroots activism home to where change begins – with young people. A gruelling focus on rote learning of the curriculum must end and instead we should open the door to an education system where students are able to understand and start to address the climate crisis. **F**

Noga Levy-Rapoport is a 17-year-old climate activist, organising strikes with the UK Student Climate Network

FOR THE WORKERS CLARE HYMER

FOR DECADES IN the global north, environmentalism has been framed as a white, middle-class preoccupation. Environmental destruction has been presented as a problem caused by individuals rather than systems, to be addressed by those with the time and means to make lifestyle changes: from buying the 'right' kinds of foods and household products to using more eco-friendly – and often more costly – forms of transport.

This framing couldn't be further from the truth. Environmental degradation and climate breakdown are at their core class issues. It is the super rich who continue to prop up the fossil fuel industry and profit from emissions causing killer floods, devastating drought and murderous hurricanes – extreme weather events which disproportionately punish the global poor. It is the capitalist system that prioritises profit for the few while the global working class suffer.

The solutions to the climate crisis we need are therefore those which transfer power and wealth to the many. This is a core strength of the 'Green New Deal' – it is a framework to articulate the ambition to put a stop to climate breakdown while guaranteeing economic justice for all. The Green New Deal recognises that the immiseration of the working class shares a root with the ruination of the climate. These dual crises must be addressed as one.

We need a 'new deal' for workers and communities in the UK and globally. This must include a renaissance in

democratic ownership to put power over the economy in the hands of the many. It has to include rights, dignity and control in work, and eliminate the possibility of poverty through un(der)employment. It must include the provision of services to guarantee everybody's basic needs, from education to childcare to transport to food.

To make sure we have a future in which to enjoy this 'new deal', it must be 'green' to the core, embedding decarbonisation at every level of the economy. We must reduce aggregate energy demand significantly to speed up the transition, meet the technical realities of renewable storage capacity, and limit the extraction of minerals currently driving conflict and pollution for poor communities in the global south. Reducing energy demand must be managed through structural changes to the economy which build public luxury for all over private luxury for some. Imposing eco-austerity on the working class misses both the point and the scale of change required.

Over the past few months the Green New Deal's principles – empowering the working class and decarbonising the economy – have been shown to be popular. Now these must be substantiated with policy proposals: from founding municipal energy companies managed democratically to accelerate the switch to renewables locally while ensuring bills stay low and energy isn't wasted, to demanding a four-day week to herald a revolution in work in order to reduce energy demand (less commuting, less ready meals, less unnecessary production) while improving conditions for the same pay. Developing these proposals, and building power to bring them to life, are the tasks at hand. **F**

Clare Hymer is a co-founder of Labour for a Green New Deal and an editor at Novara Media



RAISE THE ALARM

FARHANA YAMIN

LIFE ON EARTH is dying and the very conditions necessary for humanity's existence are threatened. Deforestation, over-fishing, belching out of pollution and plastics have toxified our oceans, lands and air. Global carbon emissions should have peaked by 2020 but after a short hiatus between 2016 and 2017, they are growing again.

Governments – local, national and subnational – need to shift to emergency mode to tackle the climate and ecological crises facing humanity. This means acting as if we were facing a life-threatening pandemic or a war-time response. During real emergencies, people come together and put aside political differences. Cross-party collaboration becomes the norm. Our national security apparatus kicks in. COBRA meets weekly or daily as needed. Governments lead the process of reorientating the economy, so produce goods and services that are actually needed instead of leaving it to the free market. This may or may not require nationalisation and banning certain activities such as exploration for new oil, gas and coal. Finance conversations change from saving up for a rainy day to the recognition that it is time to raid the war chest. People from all walks of life gift their time, their resources and their ideas freely. Everyone focuses on solutions and how to deliver them quickly. Communities come together and accept that sacrifices have to be made but they figure out systems of rationing to make this fairer. No one has an entitlement to endless purchases of disposable fashion, meat or limitless flights because all of these use up precious resources and benefit the few. This is the kind of mindset we need now: Our current – and future – policymakers must make sure of this. **F**

Farhana Yamin is an international lawyer, Greenpeace UK trustee and activist

LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN THE LEAD

JUDITH BLAKE

RADICAL AND RAPID action is needed to reverse our dependence on carbon and prevent the irreparable damage that rising global temperatures will cause to the world's ecosystems. This is a global crisis but local councils are well placed to implement some of the changes required, although we need central government support to be truly effective.

Leeds City Council – like the other 120 plus councils and local authorities in the UK – has declared a climate emergency with the ultimate aim of becoming a carbon-neutral city by 2030. But wider across the board action is needed if councils are to stand any chance of achieving this milestone.

Changing the planning system to allow councils to promote low-carbon energy could make a big difference in a short amount of time. Councils should be allowed to support renewable energy schemes, such as the extension of inland wind, and at the same time oppose carbon-intensive energy, such as fracking.

We would like to see national planning guidance on energy efficiency in new build homes strengthened. Fifty thousand new homes are due to be built in Leeds

over the next 15 years – it is essential that the design of all new homes prioritises energy efficiency, yet the current system doesn't allow councils to insist on that.

We need the power and resources to improve energy standards in commercial and residential buildings. Councils would benefit from the introduction of a new registration scheme, for instance, that would require all private-rented accommodation to meet minimum energy efficiency standards. Central funding could be directed to councils to provide private landlords and homeowners with grants to help them undertake the necessary home improvements.

Central government backing to make innovative council-led schemes viable would also make a huge difference. In Leeds we have a proposal to reduce carbon emissions from domestic gas supplies by 30 per cent, by switching the city's gas supply to pure hydrogen as the source for heating. The proposal needs central government to support the cost of carbon capture to move forward.

With adequate support from central government, local authorities can be a vital player in supporting the growth of the green economy. Labour can take the lead on this. **F**

Councillor Judith Blake is the leader of Leeds City Council

This is a global crisis but local councils are well placed to implement some of the changes



RED AND GREEN VALUES NADIA WHITTOME

A LABOUR GOVERNMENT THAT is committed to restructuring and decarbonising our economy to tackle the climate emergency must put trade unions and workers at the heart of its approach.

Trade unions need to lead the campaign for a just transition towards new technologies. Such a campaign could help win public support for millions of well paid, unionised jobs in green industries, in order to reach the target of net zero UK carbon emissions by 2030 urged by Labour for a Green New Deal.

To answer the climate crisis at every level, a Labour government must repeal all anti-union laws so workers can take action over big social and political issues, including climate change. Since more than half of carbon emissions are work-related, establishing a network of green union reps could promote green workplace practices as well as ensuring that environmental issues are included in the bargaining agenda.

This is not just an issue for unions and workers in the UK. We must look at how climate change impacts workers across the world, from farmers in Bangladesh to oil workers in Colombia and Rolls Royce workers in Derby, in order to find ways of building international solidarity and democratising climate change talks. This would allow us to learn from movements in other countries, and avoid slipping into a 'green colonialism' that wrongly blames the global south for a climate crisis created by big capital. A Labour government should instead confront neocolonial environmental narratives and provide reparations to recover the overexploited global south.

Far from being an opportunity to create a more ambitious environmental policy, a no-deal Brexit or a deal without a 'non-regression' clause would mean scrapping existing

EU safeguards as a minimum standard. Any Brexit deal would certainly limit the influence that a socialist Labour government could have to further strengthen EU-wide environmental protections, instead forcing us into years of neoliberal trade negotiations with a climate-change-denying Trump administration.

International solidarity should encompass promoting free movement for all to tackle those hit hardest by climate change. Labour has already committed to directing its armed forces – and devoting more resources – to tackle humanitarian emergencies when they arise. But one of the most meaningful expressions of solidarity with workers across the world would be for Labour to make

the environmental, economic and social case to extend free movement, not least to deal with mass displacement caused by climate disaster which could force around 140 million people to flee their homes. Promising 'reasonable management of migration', Labour's 2017 manifesto commits to upholding 'no recourse to public funds', a policy responsible for making migrants destitute, and ending freedom of movement

after Brexit. This would be the biggest border expansion in recent history and a levelling down of migrants' and workers' rights – when the global threats of climate chaos, conflict and a rising far right demand an internationalist socialist solution.

Let us now take forward the climate justice debate within the Labour party and unions, develop a Green New Deal, and push the consensus on what is necessary and possible. **F**

Nadia Whittome is a Labour and trade union activist in Nottingham and a member of the Labour for a Socialist Europe national committee

This is not just an issue for unions and workers in the UK. We must look at how climate change impacts workers across the world

CLEANING UP OUR ACT ALEX SOBEL MP

LABOUR IS THE only party which can reverse the terrible damage to public health in our towns and cities. We are in desperate need of a new Clean Air Act, emulating the urgency of the first, passed after the great smog of 1952. The difference with our more modern pollutants is that they are invisible, making it much easier for government to ignore the drastic consequences to the health of the British public. UK cities consistently fail to meet their EU and UK targets for nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter, and whilst we must ensure that these targets are urgently met, we must also set our standards higher. After all, there are no safe levels of human consumption of either of these major pollutants. We must therefore take seriously, at national and continental level, the standards set by the World Health Organization, enshrining them in legislation as targets.

However, simply installing higher targets for local authorities to meet is not enough. It is vital that councils are given the funding and power that they need to really make changes to the way that their towns and cities run. This means funding Clean Air Zones properly, but also ensuring that public transport receives the investment it desperately needs. We need new powers given to councils such as bus regulation to really provide an alternative to private cars. We must also be at the forefront of the fourth industrial revolution, providing new green jobs and proper electric infrastructure to modernise our new green economy. **F**

Alex Sobel is the Labour MP for Leeds North West, a member of the environmental audit select committee and the parliamentary lead for SERA, Labour's environment campaign



WINNING OVER THE VOTERS MELANIE SMALLMAN

EARLIER THIS SUMMER, Theresa May committed the UK to achieving net zero carbon emission by 2050. This means that within our lifetimes we will see the UK adding no more greenhouse gas emissions to the atmosphere. In response, Labour has indicated that it might want to go further faster, with newspapers reporting that John McDonnell is considering aiming for net zero by 2030. For those of us in the environment movement who have been campaigning for decades even to get climate change on the political agenda, both of these are significant steps in the right direction. But commitments need to be followed by actions. So how will Labour find the policies that meet these ambitious carbon reduction targets and attract voters to the party too?

To begin, if we are to bring about the scale of transformation needed to reach these ambitious targets, we need environmental policies that have the widespread appeal to move our country to change. In these unprecedented times, it is easy to believe that Britain is an irrevocably divided country and that political parties need to choose sides – leave or remain, north or south, public or private, extinction rebellion or climate denial. But as we see the creeping impact of climate change coupled with the effects of technology and automation, issues troubling low-income households now – like job security and the affordability of housing – will be worrying middle-class households in the near future. When it comes to the environment, we are definitely all in it together. So to tackle climate change with the scale and urgency needed, we cannot just talk to the core of environmentalists or Labour supporters. We need policies that have broad appeal – that will win the support of voters in Swindon and Swansea, as well as in Liverpool and London. This will mean offering a sense of optimism for the future – focusing on promoting opportunity and creating jobs rather than restricting and protecting old industries; on increasing fairness and improving people's life chances than simply safeguarding what we have already; on empowering rather than worrying; and on international cooperation rather than isolationism.

Secondly, to kickstart this move to build a better future, we need to see a massive investment in the UK's infrastructure, to upgrade systems – many built in the steam age – to be fit for the low-carbon, digital age. Energy, water and transport in particular need to be in our sights if we are not to see vital services being unaffordable to many in the future. We must move towards a much less wasteful distributed energy system which allows much more space for smaller-scale renewables, coupled with a serious programme of energy efficiency measures; stop the shocking neglect of our water supplies while water companies profit and take a coherent view of transport infrastructure so that it grows within our carbon budgets. To do this needs serious government leadership, but also partnership with the businesses sitting on the financial resources, as well as with local government and the NGOs which have the on-the-ground delivery experience to make much of this happen.

And they are ready and willing. While the Tories have been sending out mixed messages about their commitment to tackling climate change by cancelling programmes like feed-in tariffs, the low-carbon investments, jobs and industries of the future have been put on ice. A Labour government with clear plans for a low-carbon future could light the touch paper to launch these investments, creating jobs and opportunities in the UK instead.

Finally, whether we aim for net zero by 2030 or 2050, moving to a low carbon future will create a massive momentum for change in the UK – and globally. This presents a huge opportunity for a Labour government to harness this change, to bring about the kind of progressive future for which we have been campaigning for so long. This means being careful in selecting our policies to deliver a low-carbon future, choosing those which have the potential to increase fairness as well as tackle environmental problems. Of course this seems like a lofty ambition, but at SERA we have put environmental justice and

social justice on an equal footing from our foundation in 1974. And we are confident that the policies are out there: encouraging community and cooperatively owned renewable energy so that we decarbonise our energy supply, empower citizens and share profits more fairly; insulating homes and building new passive housing, so that families can have low-bill or even no-bill

lifestyles; investing in technology so that we can live in a more connected world, without fearing for our impact on the planet; creating low carbon jobs that are secure because they are in industries that aren't vulnerable to volatile and fluctuating oil prices; and supporting international cooperation, across Europe and the world, raising up human rights and reducing conflict, against the forces of catastrophic climate change.

The bar is high, but if Labour can put forward a story for the environment that resonates with our values and delivers for people and planet, as well as showing fresh thinking and a compelling positive vision for the future, we will also be able to build the broad appeal and support we need to win a general election. **F**

Melanie Smallman is a lecturer in science and technology studies at University College London and co-chair of Labour's environment campaign SERA

We cannot just talk to the environmentalists or Labour supporters



Time to act

The detention of young people with autism and learning disabilities is a national scandal, writes *Harriet Harman MP*



Harriet Harman is the Labour MP for Camberwell and Peckham and has served twice as interim Labour party leader

WE REGARD OURSELVES as a civilised society with a respect for human rights. And it is right that we should take extra care to support young people and those with disabilities. But the brutal truth is that we are failing to protect some of our most vulnerable children and young people – those with autism and learning disabilities. And indeed, worse than that, we are currently detaining and inflicting terrible suffering on them and causing anguish to their distraught families.

The horrific reality is that children and young adults with autism and learning disabilities are being sectioned under the mental health act and taken to specialist hospitals with poor conditions, far away from their families. They are being detained for months or even years on end when they should be in their community. The recent Panorama programme showing the taunting and abuse of vulnerable young patients in Whorlton Hall exposed this horrific reality and it has put the inhumane treatment of people in institutions back under the spotlight, eight years on from a similar scandal at Winterbourne View hospital.

The pathway from diagnosis to detention is tragic. What happens is this: A family grow worried about their child and raise concerns with the GP and with the child's nursery or school. It takes ages before they get an assessment and yet more time passes before they get a diagnosis of autism. All the while, families are struggling on their own, without the appropriate help for their child.

Parents who ask for government support soon find they have to battle for it – on top of holding down a job, whilst also trying to provide a peaceful home not only for their child with autism but also for their other children. Their living situation becomes impossible.

As the child gets older, families find it harder to cope. The problems mount and the mother gives up work so she can be there for her child at all times. The family income suffers, which leads to them relying on a complex, inadequate benefit system. Families ask for extra care support, but due to austerity, find their care package is going to be cut back. There are not enough specialist beds or local services to support the child.

As the situation worsens, parents are told that their child will have to go into hospital temporarily. Families are not being told about the proposal before it goes to the panel which makes the decision. They are not allowed to attend the panel. Then, the child is taken miles away from their home and placed with strangers – losing the familiarity and routine which is so essential to their wellbeing.

The parents are desperately concerned. They have difficulty visiting their children. But their concerns are treated as hostile and they are seen as a problem. The child gets worse and suffers physical restraint and solitary confinement – which the institution calls 'seclusion'. The child gets even worse, so plans to return home are shelved. The days turn into weeks and then months.

This is such a grim picture, yet these are the stories of families up and down country. And their experiences have come across powerfully in their evidence to the inquiry being undertaken by the parliament's joint committee on human rights, which I chair. The media has exposed some of this, and we've had a compelling report too from the children's commissioner, Anne Longfield.

Action is urgently needed – and the solutions are not complicated. First, there must be extra resources so that diagnosis is prompt. There must be extra funding too to support the child continuing to live with the family at home. (Institutional care is, in fact,

more expensive to the public purse but it comes from the NHS rather than cash-strapped councils). Parents must be supported to continue to work. Councils' housing policies must ensure that families with a child with autism can be appropriately housed.

The family should be recognised as the people who know the child best and must be put at the heart of the decision-making process. Residential hospital care – where it's absolutely necessary and not just because of a lack of community support – must be near the child's home to allow the parents to visit regularly.

The parents should be asked regularly if they are happy with the care their child is getting and any concerns immediately acted on. There should be proper complaints procedures which can be anonymous. And there remains a major question mark over the Care Quality Commission, the regulator of this provision. It had certified Whorlton Hall as 'good'. In doing so it provided parents with false reassurance and helped shield their children's abusers. A regulator which gets it wrong is worse than no regulator at all.

Our country is prosperous and values human rights. We cannot turn away from the suffering of these children and their families. It's time to act. **F**

Children and young adults are being detained for months or even years on end

A Brexistential crisis

Brexit has exposed fundamental flaws in our democracy going back well before 2016. *Stephen Carter* believes Labour must support major reforms to our constitution, before Britain tears itself apart



Stephen Carter is a researcher and campaigner on human rights and corruption and a council member of Unlock Democracy

AS BRITISH POLITICS sinks ever deeper into Brexit chaos, it is worth taking a step back. The decision to leave the EU in 2016 was, among other things, a titanic wake-up call from people who felt disconnected from opportunity. But the anger the vote exposed was not just about social or economic problems: it was about power. People felt disenfranchised and impotent both directly, because the political system gave them no real voice or influence, and indirectly, because it failed to deliver the opportunities they needed. Whether we finally stay or leave, if we want to mend our society – or just save our country from disintegration – we have to fix our broken politics. For Labour above all, this should be a call to arms.

The scale of our political crisis is too big to be denied. Ninety per cent of those who gave Nigel Farage's Brexit party victory in the EU parliamentary elections in May believe both UK and EU politics are 'broken'. But that belief cuts across the political divide: fewer than 10 per cent of us have faith in local or national government. In practice, most local governments are the disempowered lackeys of Westminster, even as UK regional inequality is the worst in western Europe. And money has tainted our democracy – long before the scandal of Farage's billionaire backers.

Our unfit-for-purpose first past the post voting system has long lent governments an artificially inflated legitimacy, and made it easier for them to ignore large parts of the population. First past the post has meant that the votes of most people – 68 per cent at the last election – simply do not count towards electing MPs. This allows colossal distortions: Ukip and the Greens together won more than a million votes in 2017, but elected a grand total of one MP. The SNP, with roughly half a million votes, won 37. Labour won a comfortable majority in 2005 with barely over 35 per cent

of the vote – something which should have been grounds for urgent alarm, not for the spectacular complacency of a '35 per cent strategy'. Whatever your party, this record raises fundamental questions about the health of our democracy.

So Brexit has to be understood in the context of a political system which has gone seriously wrong. People's disempowerment is real. Why should they not be angry? And when they are given the chance to cast a vote which actually does count, why should they not use it to supposedly 'take back control'?

And if our broken political system helped create Brexit, Brexit in turn has both revealed and amplified its dysfunction. Unchecked illegal money and foreign interference influenced the vote. The government has since attempted a sweeping grab of powers to reshape UK law, and put the conventions enshrining the rights of the devolved nations under extreme stress. Under first past the post the next Tory leader (chosen by a tiny electorate of party members) could yet win a parliamentary majority for a deeply unpopular hard Brexit on barely more than a third of the vote, as remainers split between other parties. As we grapple with a hugely divisive question, instead of creating trust and consensus, our constitution is turbocharging the crisis and threatens to drive us to destruction.

This storm, brought to a head by Brexit but with much deeper roots, threatens our country's very existence. The likelihood of a second independence referendum in Scotland is growing daily, and could easily spell the end of the UK. Meanwhile our politics become ever more polarised. One side will likely cry foul regardless of whether or not we finally leave: either way, our country faces a major crisis of legitimacy.

And this crisis is a fundamental concern for any progressive agenda. If nothing else, consider that parties to the left

The next Tory leader could yet win a parliamentary majority for a deeply unpopular hard Brexit on barely more than a third of the vote



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of the Conservatives won a majority of votes in 14 of the last 17 general elections, but the Tories held power for more than 60 per cent of that period. At that price, tolerating first past the post in hope of generating an unrestrained Labour-only majority looks not just cynical but utterly self-indulgent. And as a basic matter of principle, surely the very core of Labour's fight is whether the rich and powerful are allowed to rig the system so that power is exercised in proportion to wealth and strength, not democratic numbers. It is in the interests of many people – and indeed many hostile states – to see the UK divided, cynical, angry, and apathetic. Turning back that tide is both a moral imperative for Labour, and essential for any prospect of a lasting progressive Britain.

All these are reasons why we need to act. But for Labour the need is particularly urgent. The current compromise position on Brexit is untenable – as is evident in the haemorrhaging of support in recent elections and the close call in Peterborough (where the party scraped through with the lowest winning by-election vote ever recorded, and only because the Brexit party split the right-wing vote). There may have been some principled arguments for as well as against the policy, but in practical terms it looks like a disastrous liability.

The alternative can only be to return the issue to the people in some form: Labour will never back hard Brexit. Given the strong possibility that even soft Brexit will make people worse off without increasing our overall sovereignty, it is at least debatable whether that would be the working class betrayal some people see it as. But MPs like Lisa Nandy have a very fair point about the anger a second referendum will generate in some quarters. If the Labour party really has to tell voters it cannot in good conscience

go forward with Brexit, then it had damn well better have an alternative proposition ready to answer their concerns.

Brexit was never a very good vehicle to 'take back control', but Labour can offer something that is. That would be a worthy response to the 2016 vote, but above all it would be a relevant one. You don't fight anger and disempowerment with watered-down populism, you fight it with actual empowerment: with thoughtful, deep-seated, systematic reform. That will be needed if we stay – and even more if we leave. The messy reality of any form of Brexit, whether it is unequal trade deals with the United States or continued subordination to rules set in Brussels, seems unlikely to assuage the anger many feel (and will hugely increase it elsewhere, especially in Scotland).

To Labour's great credit, its last two manifestos promised a constitutional convention, and some key figures, like John McDonnell, have taken a stand for reform. But commitments to change the system have a great habit of falling by the wayside once that system has delivered a party to power. The danger is that in the chaos around either Brexit or its cancellation, Labour will see political reform as a distraction from the 'bread and butter' issues of economic redistribution that have traditionally been our focus, and which the leadership seem most comfortable with.

That would be a mistake. Of course, Jeremy Corbyn is absolutely correct to say that inequality and exclusion cut across the Brexit divide, even as they helped boost support for the leave campaign. The alienation Brexit highlighted was present and largely ignored for years before 2016, and will continue whether or not we are in the EU. But again, the 2016 vote – like the 2014 Scottish referendum – showed a colossal pent-up anger at the political status quo. Labour made the mistake of focusing too much on material arguments in both of those campaigns, and got hammered. This is about the narrative: we have to tell a new story about our country and our politics, not just our economy. If Labour does not do so, others will exploit those forces in much less positive ways.

In practice, that means Labour has to be much more ambitious about calling for systematic reform. Its manifesto could include measures ranging from lobbying reform to a federal House of Lords. But it should also be loudly championing a national conversation, asking every party to sign up to a truly citizen-led process of systematic constitution-building, to bring power closer to the people without breaking the bonds of common obligation between us. A citizens' assembly, with the involvement of the politicians and experts but not led by them, is likely the best way to do this (and it might even be a relatively cross-party way to help address Brexit itself). Labour's own aim, the story it tells, should be a Britain of free nations and regions, balancing local empowerment with national solidarity, where billionaires or bankers have no more power than ordinary citizens. A country worthy of its people.

And this should come naturally for Labour. It is a party of *social democracy* – and changing the system is surely at the heart of what it stands for. If it uses power for better ends, but does not change how it is distributed and won, has it really fulfilled that duty? For the sake of our progressive ideals, of the legitimacy of our government, of our very future as a nation, Labour has to take this moment of crisis, and lead. ■



A C R
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IT'S RARE TO see an MP touted as an ideal prime minister not just by some in their own party but by a senior figure in a rival one. Yet Yvette Cooper, according to Lib Dem leadership contender Sir Ed Davey, is just the sort of person who could lead a government of national unity to get us out of the Brexit mess. Cooper shrugs off the suggestion – but she makes a pretty good pitch nonetheless for why that might just be the best option for Britain.

Cross-party working, building a consensus and healing divisions pepper her conversation. “I don’t see how that works,” she says of Davey’s suggestion that his party could help bring down the next Tory PM and then back someone like her to prevent the country crashing out of Europe without a deal. But she adds: “I think you do need cross-party working at the moment on issues that are as important as this. That’s why we had the cross-party working in the spring to prevent a chaotic no-deal Brexit which would have hit manufacturing jobs and when we’d been advised by the counter-terror chief in the country that it will make Britain less safe. I’ve got 15,000 manufacturing jobs in my constituency – you have a responsibility to work cross-party to sustain those sorts of jobs.”

Cooper namechecks politicians from both sides of the political divide as she argues for a citizens’ assembly as the ‘best next step’ on Brexit. “I started off very sceptical about citizens’ assemblies,” she says. “But listening to people like Stella Creasy, Lisa Nandy, Gordon Brown, Rory Stewart and others and looking at what’s been done in other

parts of the world, I think it is an opportunity for people to come together with very different views, and to listen to evidence, to deliberate about evidence. This would be a different, more thoughtful way of trying to change and reform politics.”

But crucial to building consensus is an ability to reach out to other parties – and that quality has been lacking at the very top. As an MP first elected in the same year as Theresa May and then shadow home secretary when May was at the Home Office, Cooper is well-placed to give a verdict on the outgoing prime minister. And again national divisions are uppermost in her mind: even though she says she respects May’s hard work and ‘sense of duty’, ultimately the soon-to-be-ex PM failed because she ‘isn’t the kind of politician who reaches out’.

“It is tragic that she didn’t immediately after she became prime minister try to bring people together,” Cooper says. “I called on her at the time to set up a cross-party commission to do things to bring together people from both sides of the Brexit divide and to have a positive debate about what kind of future we wanted the country to have. And actually she did the opposite. She fuelled the divisions instead. I think that was a deep, deep mistake that has had huge consequences and has escalated and continued the polarisation in a really damaging way. I don’t know how long it’s going to take for the country to heal as a result.”

When she spoke at the recent Fabian Society summer conference, Cooper focused on the hostility and vitriol she sees poisoning our national political debate. It’s a subject she is keen to expand on, putting some of the blame on social media. “Social media is a really good example of new technology that creates all kinds of amazing possibilities and has helped people reconnect with old friends from years ago and helped people build local campaigns to improve a local park,” she says. “But it’s also being used and exploited to incite hatred or extremism or abuse. I often talk to people who say they no longer do things online, or post their views on Facebook or on Twitter, for example, because they’re just fed up of the abuse that they receive. That’s not simply about people who are in public life – somebody was

**We need
a different, more
thoughtful way
of trying to
change politics**

O S S

If we want our country to heal we need a fresh approach, Yvette Cooper tells *Kate Murray*

N E S

telling me she'd set up a local Facebook group just about trying to get some improvements in her local area. She ended up being targeted by abuse because of it and so she gave it up when actually she was just trying to do good and bring people together."

Social media companies should do more, she says, to stamp down on the worst abuse. So too should those of us who use online platforms. "Sometimes it's actually just about all of us being able to show some kindness and respect online, rather than getting sucked into ever greater short-term anger and abuse," she explains. "We've got this new way of communicating. But we haven't actually developed the sort of respectful and kind ways of doing so. It is possible to have very passionate debate and to be very angry about issues without being poisonous."

Politicians must also do their bit to counter the current toxic climate. "There's a huge responsibility on politicians not to polarise things, and not to increase the vitriol in politics, so leadership really matters."

Out in the country, the divisions and inequality which contributed to the vote to leave the EU remain unresolved. Injustice in our economy was, says Cooper, behind her decision to chair the Changing Work Centre, set up by Community trade union and the Fabian Society. The issues it is exploring – how work is changing and how politicians and policy-makers should respond – are critical to building a society which works for all in the years to come.

"We are in danger as a country of missing the huge fundamental changes that are taking place in work, in the way we live our lives and around social justice," she says.

"The labour movement came out of the industrial revolution and we also need to be at the forefront of the response to the digital and technological revolutions taking place at the moment."

Just as the first industrial revolution generated huge wealth and growth but gross exploitation too, so today's fast-changing world of work brings risks as well as opportunities, Cooper adds. In the work of the Changing Work Centre's Commission on Workers and Technology she and her fellow commissioners have been travelling the country, talking to workers who have seen both the benefits and the disadvantages technology can bring. In one retail warehouse they visited, where the employer and trade union worked well together and workers were consulted, automation has made people's jobs easier and boosted productivity. But in other settings, technology has been 'used to control people and monitor the workforce and effectively penalise them if they're not matching what are effectively particular robotic standards'.

She asks: "The question is: are we going to stand back and let technological change and the free market drive what happens? Or are we as human beings going to drive our future and use technology to empower people rather than using technology to exploit people?"

According to the commission's interim findings, six out of 10 workers say they are shut out of decisions about new technology in their workplace – and that could widen inequality. "If the workforce is part of the discussions, it improves things in all sorts of different ways," says Cooper.

"First, you are more likely to get technological improvements that work because your workforce can tell you 'actually that's going to work' and be really practical about it. Secondly, you're more likely to get improvements that are fair. And thirdly it's more likely to be sustainable."

Technology, Cooper believes, is 'the embodiment of the best of human creativity'. "We've always looked for creative new solutions to problems. That might be about using technology to tackle climate change, to help us do things with far less, to cut carbon emissions for example. Or it might be about using technology to help people work from home and juggle family life and work, or caring responsibilities and work," she says. "It might be about new, creative jobs that are made possible by technology. It might be about all sorts of amazing things – there are always all kinds of new possibilities. The question is whether you use those new opportunities for good or whether they end up being used to exploit people instead."

Cooper underlines the proud history of the Labour party in tackling injustice. So how does she feel now about the state of the party? She is adamant that antisemitism must be properly addressed. "It is just shameful that we still have Jewish colleagues and Jewish members in our party ending up being targeted by antisemitism. We have a long history of fighting racism. And I think it should shame all of us that the problem of antisemitism just hasn't been addressed. My view is that we need now a proper, independent, transparent complaints process to deal with antisemitism."

But she cautions against those who would leave Labour behind.

"The Labour party has always been at its strongest when it is a broad church," she says. "From the very founding of the Labour party, we had the Fabians and the trade unions, the Marxists and the Methodists, the Christian socialists, the different traditions that all came together to form the Labour party. And part of what we believe in is the kinder gentler politics that Jeremy talked about in 2015."

Cooper believes that broad church approach within Labour – and co-operation beyond the party – is vital to tackle our biggest challenges, starting with Brexit. She insists there is still time to establish a citizens' assembly in September, before the crunch time for leaving the EU.

"It's not an alternative to parliament because parliament has to be accountable and only parliament can take decisions. But it would be a supplement that allows a different way of looking at things because people should have their voices heard. And at the moment, the only way to do so is in these short bursts on social media," she says. "I think it's the best next step from where we are. I haven't seen anybody trying to bring together leave and remain in a way that is constructive to try and find a way through."

That is the Labour way, Cooper insists.

"Building consensus is not the same as defending the status quo. The times when we have done radical things – like building the NHS or building the welfare state – are when we have built a consensus." **F**

Kate Murray is editor of the Fabian Review

We need to be at the forefront of the response to the digital and technological revolutions

Happily ever after

Is good politics just about helping people to become successful and resilient? Or is there more to life than that?
Chloe Combi reflects on why we're getting happiness so wrong



*Chloe Combi is the author of the book
 Generation Z: Their Voices, Their Lives*

AS WE HEAD towards 2020, there is an uncomfortable truth we have to face: no one in the UK seems very happy. On the face of it, this seems a problematic statement to unpick – happiness is after all a rather intangible and unscientific state of being and being happy is a responsibility we often place firmly on the individual themselves.

But let's dig deeper. What is happiness? What makes us happy? Is it health? Is it wealth? Is it beauty? Is it to have goals we have some hope of achieving? Is it equality? Or fairness? Cleanliness? Safety? Does a belief in God make us happy? Does technology – or conversely, disconnecting from technology – make us happy? Do friends make us happy? Does family make us happy? Is the state of happiness having some or all of these things? Or is happiness entirely independent of these, and a mysterious thing that just happens sometimes, fleetingly and unpredictably, like solar eclipses, heatwaves or falling in love?

These are questions I've asked a lot over the last few years of mostly young people who fall into the Generation Z category (aged between 12 and 23). Being asked about happiness seems to confuse them more than just about anything else. It also provides very different answers depending on *where* you are. I have travelled for work in more than 40 countries over the last two years and I would argue that a powerful factor in the 'are you happy?' question is actually – particularly where young people are concerned – geography. Happiness in some countries seems to be both an art and a science and something they take very seriously indeed. In other countries – and I would include the UK in this – happiness is more akin to political correctness – a thing people have to pretend to take seriously, but in truth find a bit faddy, weird, or irritating and something only the really get privileged get to own. The education system, legal system and most governments take your feelings and wellbeing much more seriously if you happen to be well-off.

But let's go back in time a little. About 18 months ago, I was at a conference about childhood wellbeing in the UK and I dared to suggest that we were massively failing young people in the happiness department. The statistics speak

for themselves and make for fairly grim reading: three in five 16 to 25-year-olds are stressed and worried about the future, jobs and money, and one in four in the same age group feel 'hopeless', according to a Prince's Trust Survey. The vast majority of young people in the UK have low to very low body image – something that is exacerbated by the fact that 90 per cent of them frequent social media platforms like Instagram and Snapchat which feature a smorgasbord of heavily air-brushed beauties. And one in four people in the UK will experience a mental health problem in any given year, meaning mental health services are stretched beyond all capacity, unless you can afford to obtain them privately – another system that works much better for you if you have money.

A prominent figure at the conference whose job was policy-making in children's wellbeing and mental health snapped at me that: "Happiness was an unrealistic and romantic notion and we should set realistic and obtainable goals for young people like success and resilience." I was surprised at her statement, because I would argue not only are these things not mutually exclusive – but that they cannot exist without each other.

Let's consider success. Some of the most 'successful' young people I know and have interviewed are the most stressed and unhappy – Annabelle, 17, who got 12 A*s at GCSEs and then spent the next two years in a clinic being treated for anorexia nervosa (ongoing); Trent, 18, who is preparing to go to Yale in the USA and has night terrors and obsessive-compulsive disorder and Katie, 15, who is an Olympic hopeful and self-harms and is stuck in a binge-purge cycle of eating. They represent just a tiny snapshot of the many thousands of successful but deeply unhappy young people in this country.

This brings us to resilience. Without exception, every young person I've interviewed (in every country) said they felt *most* resilient (able to deal with life's knocks, scrapes and challenges), when they were 'happy'.

They might suggest a few quick fixes to reach this elusive state of happiness – likes on Instagram, supermodel lips or lots of cash, say – but this all comes with a rueful acknowledgment that these are either quick flashes of pleasure and



ego or abstract concepts that may or may not make them happy in reality. After all, lots of rich, famous and beautiful people are very, very unhappy – and most young people know that.

But when you really press young people on times, things, people or places that actually, demonstrably make them happy, the answers get much more interesting. Their answers are all rooted in quite profound concepts I believe we are losing touch with in the UK: childhood, memory, freedom, self-realisation, unity, play and the luxury of time—concepts that lots of other countries are not only resolutely in touch with, but heavily invest in. Consider these anecdotes of real happiness from the UK's Gen Zs:

“The last time I remember being seriously happy was the last days of school – late primary school or early high-school before everyone got mad anxious. That last day of school when you had the whole summer stretching out ahead of you. Everyone would sign each other's shirts and play rounders and it was hot and you'd have a water-fight and get into bare trouble with the teachers, but you could tell they weren't *that* mad. Those were the *best days*.”

Albie, 18

“Do you remember the summer when everyone was off school and no one had phones, and before parents started freaking about everything and arguing all the time – like if you went off for the day – and you just had these adventures doing nothing much? I can't even remember how old I was then – maybe nine or ten? No one in my neighbourhood had much money – but it didn't seem to matter. We were all happy then.”

Frank, 23

“We went to the shittiest places on our school trips, and we'd all freak out the day before and have hysterics leaving our parents, sisters and goldfish the night before, but that was part of the fun. There was this sense we were all away together, and it didn't matter what was going on at school or at home – everyone was sort of equal on those trips – it felt like we were

play-acting what we hoped being an adult would be. Everyone was happy in the Isle Of White as crazy as that sounds.”

Naima, 17

“I had a brilliant group of friends from ages 6 to 17 and all our parents were best friends too. It felt sort of like a commune. We'd spend holidays, Christmases and weekends all together. If you fell out with your parents, you could go to their house and vice-versa. It was great. Once we all grew up it started to drift and fall apart – just because it did, because life, you know? I never felt happier or safer than I did in those days.”

Esther, 20

What is striking about these anecdotes (and the thousands more I have on file) about happiness is the increasing absence of these simple pleasures in our everyday lives, and the replete presence of them in the lives of others in other countries.

In the UK, for the middle-class and upwards, parenting and family life have become completely twisted around the axles of guilt, anxiety, competition and shame: what grades are your kids getting, are their diets organic, how many clubs do they attend, are you a bad parent if you do or don't get them an iPhone? If budgets are tight or you are poor, there is such a non-existence of a safety-net and your days are so consumed by trying to survive the day-to-day and week-to-week, worrying about chess clubs and screen time probably seems like a dreamy problem to have. But wherever you fall on the economic scale in the UK, family life has become a chore. It is certainly not something people have either the time or freedom from worry to *really* enjoy any more.

Not so in other countries. For example, when you visit Scandinavia and the Netherlands – countries that have powerful social security nets, enviable maternity and paternity leave, high quality physical and mental health services and governments that seek to both centralise and support family life, not damage and derail it, you discover countries where people have an abundance of freedom and time. Time to spend with family, friends or loved ones, time off from work to raise children, time to play and work

with your children and teenagers, time that is precious and should be invested in the things that make us successful, resilient and happy.

One of the biggest areas of concern for UK teachers is they have less and less time even to talk to their students at break and lunchtimes, let alone consider their individual needs whether they be academic, emotional or personal. We are all aware of countries which do these things better than we do – Finland, Japan, Denmark and Norway – and of course the inherent problems of comparing ourselves to countries so very different from ours. But what is galling is the sheer amount of sniping that occurs when the issue of making UK schools ‘happier’ places is raised. To suggest that kids should be happy, noticed individuals in the place where they spend 12 very significant years of their lives seems to be tantamount to suggesting 15-year-olds should be finger-painting with yoghurt instead of learning Shakespeare or playing Candy Crush Saga instead of learning maths. Happiness gets conflated with ‘liberal-wooliness’ or ‘snowflake culture’ and that is taking us – and our youngest generations – to a very dark place indeed.

Interestingly, some of the happiest and most engaged teenagers I’ve seen recently in the UK were those I met during the climate protests (events that were heavily influenced by Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands). It was an opportunity for young people to engage in a united goal, experience togetherness, play together (there was

lots of larking about and playfulness), scream, shout, have an adventure and feel a sense of purpose that wasn’t just about them, individual pressure or personal results. Lots of them protested with friends, family, parents or big groups of strangers – and there was lots of bonding. Of course, lots of our society and the media turned on them calling them ‘spoilt’, ‘indulged’, ‘snowflakes’, ‘middle-class elites’, ‘losers’, ‘unwashed’ and much worse.

This points to an uncomfortable truth – that perhaps we’ve become so estranged from happiness, we actually don’t really want our young people to be happy. Like Child Policy-Making Lady suggested – resilient: yes, successful: definitely yes. But happiness? We’re not so sure.

Happiness seems to centre on things we increasingly see as negative in this country: making time for each other, listening to and noticing each other’s peril, supporting those who are vulnerable, championing equal rights for all and accepting that kindness is not weakness but one of the greatest responsibilities of humanity. And this is not only a shame, but a dangerous way to think. Success, resilience, achievement, wealth, beauty and goals etc are not only much harder to reach, but impossible to enjoy if you aren’t a basically happy person. A lot of other countries seem to understand this truth better than we do, but I don’t think we should become like Denmark, Finland, Norway, Germany or Spain. We should aspire to be a happier and *ergo better* and *more successful* United Kingdom. **F**



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For the common good

Labour needs a new philosophy to guide it – and an approach with its roots in the thinking of Robert Owen, Clement Attlee and Martin Luther King could offer just that, argues *Luke John Davies*



Luke John Davies is a PhD student at Aston University. He is the chair of the Birmingham and West Midlands Fabians and sits on the Fabian Society executive committee

LABOUR'S MODERATES NEED a new paradigm, a new theory of what human beings are and what society is. Our values remain what they have always been: equality, social justice and the ability for people to make better lives for themselves. But we need a new model of how we translate those values into reality and what a good society looks like.

When the Keynesian consensus collapsed in the mid-1970s, the Chicago school of economists had their answer ready. Humanity was a collection of individuals and society was defined by competition between them. An individual's loyalty was to themselves alone, perhaps their immediate family, but they owed nothing to wider humanity. When, in turn, their neoliberal model with its massive inequalities failed in 2008, there was no social democratic alternative in place. Social democratic parties had adopted too much of the individualist perspective and become progressive liberal parties. Now, however, there are signs that a social theory may be re-emerging and it is based on an established and rich philosophical tradition which once formed part of the social democratic DNA – communitarianism.

Communitarianism is a social philosophy that places an emphasis on communities, society and the relationships individuals have with them. Communitarians recognise that although each individual makes decisions for themselves, the moral reasoning they use to do so comes from the people who surround them throughout life, especially when they're young. It therefore looks to explore ways in which shared concepts of the common good are formed, spread and changed through communities, social relations and the public moral conversation that goes on within them. In its political form, communitarianism aims to protect and promote those social relationships in a way that balances them with individual liberty.

After all, almost every form of identity an individual has denotes their belonging to a larger sub-section of humanity, whether that be family, geographical, religious, ideological, citizenship, ethnic, professional or sexuality based. The enacting of an individual's identity then is an enacting of their relationship to wider communities, and it

is that multifaceted social belonging that communitarianism focuses on. What a human being is, what personhood is, is largely the connecting point of all the communities to which they identify and belong in a continually shifting balance. Individuality is intersectionality.

Communitarians put the emphasis on an individual's belonging to multiple intersecting communities, and on solidarity, empathy and the common good. This means they are in opposition to the aggressively atomising individualism of both the neoliberalism of the centre-right and the Rawlsian progressive liberalism that has dominated much of Labour's thinking since the death of John Smith if not before.

Communitarian ideas have long been associated with the centre-left – indeed the word itself was coined by John Goodwyn Barmby, one of the leaders of the Chartists. Through the connection with Robert Owen – who, it is often forgotten, had a far greater impact on the early Labour party than Karl Marx ever did – communitarian ideas strongly influenced early British socialist and Fabian thought. To give just one example, communitarian tenets of the nature of society come through very strongly in Clement Attlee's book *The Social Worker*. In the book Attlee laid out his vision that public service should be radical, realistic, reciprocal and – vitally – relationship based. The latter two points in particular are collectivist, communitarian ideals, with solutions to the problems of the poorest being worked out with them not for them. Attlee put those communitarian ideals to work in 1945 to rebuild a battered and exhausted country. The NHS was created as a shared public institution uniting society. So too was the welfare state. Mass housebuilding allowed people to put down roots and build communities together. Other heroes of the centre-left's past, such as Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King, were also strongly communitarian in their political outlook.

Indeed, King's use of communitarian ideas is interesting, because a principle objection to communitarianism for some is that it too often slides over into authoritarianism, whereby dominant social norms are imposed on oppressed



Robert Owen

or marginalised groups. The concern that communitarianism's interest in upholding a social moral order could stray over into oppressive tendencies is a genuine one and needs to be taken seriously. It is the intellectual trap which Blue Labour fell into. This is however one area where the public conversation is some way behind academia, which addressed these concerns in the "responsive communitarian" debates of the mid-1990s.

Responsive communitarianism seeks to balance social order with individual liberty. The structure of modern society in itself supports that balancing. Unlike the historical 'total communities' of the 1950s, in the modern era the people we grow up, study, work and socialise with tend to form distinct social circles, meaning ostracisation from one, whilst painful, is far less powerful as a form of social control. The ability of the internet to connect geographically disparate individuals into a community is a further driver of this process.

Further, the social pressure itself is not an issue, indeed it is inevitable that different communities will set different rules of belonging and seek to enforce them. Rather the issue is what the norms it is used to enforce are. As liberation politics have advanced, the moral conversations have changed. In many, though sadly not yet all, communities in the UK an individual is more likely to be ostracised for being homophobic than for being homosexual. It is those public moral conversations which are key to the advancement of progressive values.

The essence of communitarianism then is in fostering the social and institutional space for that public debate and in ensuring that there are enough ties that bind us. When we focus too much on individualism and allow those unifying factors to weaken, then the fabric of society cannot withstand the pressures of a large public debate without buckling. This is sadly what we have seen since the EU

referendum: the huge public debate on what kind of country we want in the form of Brexit has led to a Balkanised and shattered society. The mission of Labour's moderates in the future will be the knitting together of Britain's ravelled common weal.

It is a daunting task, but the good news is that we are not as divided as much of the media and many populist politicians would have you believe. If you force people into a binary choice and judge them entirely on that, do not be surprised if you get a population with a binary division. Public commentators on both sides have come to see Brexit as a shibboleth and assume someone's Brexit position is a shorthand for large swathes of values, ideals and political positions. Coming from a family and community divided by Brexit, I know that assumption simply does not hold true for many people. If you broaden the discussion you will find many underlying values are in fact shared across the Brexit divide. Not all of them of course, but as Jo Cox said we are far more united and have far more in common with each other than things that divide us.

Lisa Nandy MP in her Attlee memorial lecture eruditely decried the false binary choices currently forced on us by populists of both the right and left. She was right to do so. Those choices lead us into a culture war we cannot afford. Nobody ever wins a culture war, nobody ever advanced society by insulting huge swathes of it or believing millions to be evil based on a single political choice. But that is the inevitable culmination of individualist identity politics whereby any compromise is a betrayal of the self.

To combat it we have to speak with and for all, to engage in respectful discourse and work to reduce inequality in both economic and socio-political terms. We need to give people a better stake in society and more agency over their lives as well as the means to improve their material situation.

People, not just in Britain but globally, are crying out for a less lonely, more connected life. For an economy which aims not at enriching a tiny few but at providing a good living for all, and in which the fetishisation of growth is recognised as being merely the exponential extraction of finite and diminishing resources. Where an economy providing for all without massive leaps in GDP is recognised as sustainable, not stagnant. For a politics where power is invested closer to home, in our regions, cities and streets; where we dare to do more democracy. For a country that invests in its own social and physical infrastructure – in public transport, education and the NHS but also in the cultural touchstones that bind us together: sports clubs, civil society, the local pub and local post office, music, culture and the arts. And most important of all dignified and decent housing. People cannot build communities unless they have a secure and stable place to live.

That is an agenda built on prioritising people and how they fit together in society. It is an agenda that is bold, radical, achievable and fit for purpose in the 21st century. It is also an agenda that can only be tenably held together by an understanding of humanity and society as intertwined, collectivist and invested in each other. We truly can achieve more by our common endeavour than we can alone. ■

The huge public debate on what kind of country we want in the form of Brexit has led to a Balkanised and shattered society

Calling a truce

At a time when the past indiscretions of Tory leadership contenders have put drug use back in the headlines, Labour should take the lead on reforming drugs policy. *Vanesha Singh* makes the case



Vanesha Singh is assistant editor of the Fabian Review

FOR THE FIRST time in a long while, the Conservatives have done something worthwhile: they've opened the floor for Labour to have a better conversation about drugs. The current Labour leadership prides itself on challenging the status quo. Well, UK drug policy is long overdue a shake-up. The war on drugs has utterly failed, as Labour peer and ex-Lord chancellor Charles Falconer admitted last year alongside an apology for his role in enforcing it. The black market has done nothing but grow; people have not been deterred from selling or taking drugs – record amounts of cocaine are being seized in Europe – and drug-related harm is on the rise. Scotland has the highest drug death rate in the whole of Europe.

It is good that Labour recently supported the trial of consumption rooms where addicts can take drugs under medical supervision. Such rooms have been proven to reduce drug-related deaths elsewhere in Europe. But on the whole the party has been too quiet on re-examining how the UK classifies narcotics in the first place. This is despite the fact that a number of other countries have reclassified recreational drugs, with great results.

Last year some momentum had built around the idea of reforming Labour's drug policy. MPs Thangam Debonaie and Jeff Smith launched the Labour Campaign for Drug Policy Reform while party members have been encouraged to contribute ideas to help shape party policy. But with several Conservative leadership contenders making the headlines for admitting to taking drugs, there have been moves in the opposite direction, including calls for all MPs to be regularly drugs-tested. This is a sentiment that stands in stark contrast to the vast numbers of British police officers and medical professionals calling for the decriminalisation. With drugs back on the agenda, Labour must seize this moment and lead a progressive, national conversation on reforming our laws – before another party gets there first.

Across the UK, attitudes towards drugs are said to be relaxing. That is not to suggest Labour should be moving to legalise hallucinogenics by the end of its first year in power. That would be inconceivable for people who have been told their whole lives to 'just say no'. A dialogue needs to be opened first. But for this to be done productively,

left-leaning politicians and policy wonks alike must stop treating drugs as a taboo subject. Instead they should openly engage with the mountains of evidence that suggests, first, that certain illicit drugs have been incorrectly classified and second, that decriminalising, or legalising, regulating and taxing drugs has actually been more beneficial to users, society and the economy.

It might well be argued that with so many other very serious issues to deal with – such as the millions of UK children currently living in poverty – drug reform shouldn't be high on Labour's priority list. But the war on drugs is costing each UK taxpayer approximately £400 a year; money that could be better spent elsewhere.

Moreover, our legal framework disproportionately affects the people our party claims to represent: the most vulnerable, those living in poverty and black and minority ethnic communities. Because it is a criminal offence to possess illegal drugs, users are less likely to access health and social support services. The Home Office has rejected plans to allow for 'safe injection' rooms for addicts in Glasgow – but it is lower-income drug users that are more likely to die of an overdose. People of colour are also more heavily policed and arrested for drug-related offences. Black people, despite using cannabis at a lower rate, are 12 times more likely to be sentenced for possession than their white counterparts. And because of our laws, people with serious health conditions are being denied life-saving cannabis oil treatment – mother Julie Galloway has spoken out about being forced to live in Rotterdam to access a version of cannabis oil that is crucial to saving her child's life but illegal here in the UK. Meanwhile white Conservative politicians can admit to taking Class A drugs with no legal repercussions. It proves, once again, that the more privileged sections of society seem to be beyond the law.

The way in which we have criminalised certain drugs is neither fair nor sensible. Yet experts who have spoken out about this have been silenced. Professor David Nutt, who was the government's chief drug adviser, was sacked after claiming that alcohol and tobacco were more harmful than many illegal drugs, including LSD, ecstasy and cannabis. Niamh Eastwood, the executive director of a drugs



© Wellcome Trust

advice charity who has pushed for a more open, sensible, evidence-based UK drug policy, was blocked from advising the Conservative government because of concerns that she would be 'hard to work alongside'.

Currently in the UK, under the 1971 misuse of drugs act, drugs are divided into one of three classes based on their perceived harmfulness – A, B and C. The act is the main basis of British drugs law, with controlled substances such as heroin, cocaine, ecstasy and LSD bracketed under Class A and cannabis, for instance, reclassified in 2008 as Class B. Our laws attempt to tackle both the supply and demand side of the drugs trade. It is an offence to produce, supply and export drugs, but users are also penalised, with the maximum sentence for possession of a Class A drug being up to seven years. Crucially, analysis proves there is almost no correlation between overall associated harm and the class of drugs.

Our prohibitionist approach to drugs policy in the UK – and in many nations worldwide – has its legal foundation in the United Nations (UN) drug treaties of 1961, 1971 and 1988. In 1961, the UN took a moral stance against drugs, arguing that "addiction to narcotic drugs constitutes a serious evil for the individual and is fraught with social and economic danger to mankind". More than 150 countries ratified into law a hard-line stance against a range of psychoactive substances with the intent to regulate both supply and demand – the ultimate aim being the creation of a 'drug-free world'. Despite their dangers, neither alcohol or tobacco were to be controlled by the UN. Interestingly, it was the economies with key interests in the alcohol industry – the United States and Europe – that had the most power in establishing global norms at the end of

the 20th century, as Professor Sue Pryce revealed in her groundbreaking book *Fixing Drugs*.

And this is worth underlining: the recreational substances that have been controlled have always reflected the cultural and economic interests of the dominant powers at the time. Power is key to understanding what has been deemed acceptable or not. This was true in the 1800s when Western powers suddenly turned against opiates to

damage Chinese economic interests. We saw it too in the early 20th century in the West with cocaine and opiates being criminalised after much of their use shifted from middle-class women to working-class men. In the UK, a tougher stance on cannabis came into play after the drug was associated with West Indian immigrants. And we see power

in play too in today's international disapprobation of the Andean states that use and produce coca, despite its similarities to tobacco. This is why the current legal framework is not necessarily reflective of which drugs are 'good' and which are 'bad'. It is not rooted in science.

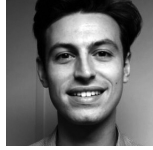
Over the last decade a vast number of countries have accepted the evidence that drug classifications are inaccurate and that prohibition has caused more harm than good to users and society. Among the countries changing tack are the Netherlands, Portugal, Switzerland, Uruguay and Canada. Their progressive policies have led to a wealth of benefits including huge decreases in the number of drug-related deaths, improved health outcomes for users, with the Netherlands, for example, generating more than £300m a year from taxing recreational substances. With this in mind, it really is surprising that a Labour party dedicated to 'doing things differently' in countless other policy areas is still so stuck in the past. ■

Power is key to understanding what has been deemed acceptable or not

Books

Working model

The challenges thrown up by the changing world of work demand innovative policy solutions, writes *Josh Abey*



Josh Abey is the Fabian Society's lead researcher for the Commission on Workers and Technology

Dramatic changes to the world of work are throwing up complex policy challenges across the advanced economies. In the UK, strong topline employment figures mask troubling phenomena such as the emergence of precarious work in the gig economy. We have seen radical changes in the relationship between workers and the firms that engage them. And, in many cases, precarity has been enabled by technological change which policymakers have not yet got to grips with.

How do we confront the rise of the gig economy, where 'platform' firms enable workers to provide services flexibly but without the security of traditional employment? This is the question that Colin Crouch attempts to answer in *Will the Gig Economy Prevail?* Examining what has happened over the last three decades in OECD member states, Crouch does a remarkable job of both picking apart labour market changes and providing novel and compelling policy recommendations.

Crouch's dissection of change across labour markets extends into consideration of the impact of technology change and automation – and he offers original insights. It is often said that a feature of the current technological revolution is that, unlike in previous revolutions, high-skill jobs are under threat. Crouch stresses that this picture of the past is inaccurate. For example, producing ornate copies of religious texts was once viewed as a highly skilled activity. It is only in retrospect that we have come to view this job, which was made redundant by technology change, as 'mind-numbingly laborious'. Previous industrial revolutions were accompanied by widespread upheaval and distress which, Crouch asserts, 'will be repeated'. Preventing exactly this – through pre-emptive action from government, trade unions and employers to ensure technology change benefits workers – is the central aim of the Fabian Society's Commission on Workers and Technology, which we established in partnership with the trade union Community and is chaired by Yvette Cooper.

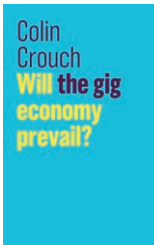
Plotting the best course of action means recognising that the increase in precarious work has not taken place in a vacuum. The social policy infrastructure within which the gig economy has developed has to be placed at the centre of our thinking. To this end, Crouch fully engages with the role that social security might have in future. This aspect of the debate has tended to focus on the virtues and drawbacks of a universal basic income (UBI), and Crouch

devotes a reasonable amount of space to discussing the policy. His critical objection, however, is that UBI is somewhat at odds with the notion that firms using precarious labour should meet certain obligations to their workers and to the rest of society. The policy shifts the burden of responsibility away from firms and onto the state. In other words, UBI lets exploitative firms off the hook.

The future of work debate is in need of genuinely innovative new policy proposals, and Crouch provides them. He advocates for an approach that combines Danish 'flexicurity' with a new kind of contributory social insurance fund to pay for it. The flexicurity model accepts a reduction in statutory protection of 'standard' employment – essentially making it easier for firms to hire and fire workers on permanent full-time contracts – at the same time as high public spending on training and lifelong learning, more generous unemployment benefits, and strong trade unions with the capacity to engage in collective bargaining. It is designed to ensure that the labour market is dynamic and productive, while workers benefit from high income replacement rates in between jobs, real support to acquire new skills and strong wage growth negotiated by unions.

Such a model is clearly expensive. Crouch rises to the challenge of setting out how countries can pay for it: by adopting a social insurance system that all 'users of labour' – not just traditional employers – contribute to. Users of labour would pay differential rates depending on how many hours of labour they used, and – crucially – would make lower payments if they agreed to give their workers full employment contracts, provided opportunities for training and accepted bargaining with trade unions. Contributions from 'users of labour' would be in addition to contributions from individuals, which would vary according to income instead of labour market status. Self-employed workers would pay as much as standard employees if their income was the same, and they would have the same entitlement to welfare state provision.

The model Crouch proposes means those who benefit from precarious labour pay for the costs it generates – whether that is through contributing to the social programmes that protect against the harms of insecurity, or through incentivising firms to fulfil a wider set of obligations towards workers. *Will the Gig Economy Prevail?* is essential reading for anyone interested in what has happened to the world of work and what should happen next. **F**



Will the gig economy prevail?

Colin Crouch
Polity Press,
£9.99

Tragic consequences

Frances Ryan draws much-needed attention to the human costs of austerity, as *Simon Duffy* explains



Dr Simon Duffy is the founder and director of the Centre for Welfare Reform

I was radicalised by austerity, and I remain astonished that so many others seem not to have been. Recently, talking to an old friend and fellow member of the Labour party, I found he was more outraged by Brexit than by austerity and was even thinking of joining the first incarnation of Change UK. Crippled, a powerful book by respected journalist Frances Ryan, is the perfect wake-up call for anyone similarly sleepwalking through austerity.

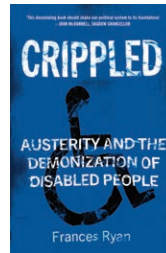
Crippled integrates moving human stories with an array of facts and data to demonstrate the vicious harm caused by the post-2010 cuts. It describes how disabled people are the primary target of welfare reforms, savage cuts to local authority funding and the collapse of legal aid. It throws the impact of these policies into harsh and painful relief, through the testimony of the disabled children and adults who are being pumelled by government cuts.

Statistics are more powerful than just numbers when you realise the reality behind them is malnutrition, homelessness, debt, physical and mental illness, prostitution, young children caring for their parents, women who cannot afford to flee domestic violence, suicide and unnecessary deaths. Austerity kills and it is killing disabled people. Ryan does a brilliant job of describing the human costs.

As Ryan explains, part of the reason that the UK government has got away with what it has done is that disabled people are not seen as equal citizens. While some disabled people, like Stephen Hawking for example, are idolised for ‘overcoming’ their disability, too many people are pitied or shamed for ‘failing’ to do so. Worse, as economic times get tougher, and the powerful seek to distract us, disabled people have been turned into a perfect scapegoat group. The rise of disability hate crime, fuelled by political and media rhetoric, reveals the shabby moral fabric of modern Britain.

Ryan ends the book on a hopeful note, believing the austerity tide is finally turning; and John McDonnell, who has been a consistent ally of disabled people through these dark times, says that the book ‘should shake the political system to its foundations’. But I am left wondering whether our system has any foundations worth the name.

For austerity is also the story of the complete failure of the political system and of civil society to protect the



**Crippled:
Austerity
and the
Demonization
of Disabled
People**
Frances Ryan
Verso,
£12.99

human rights of disabled people. The United Nations has published several critical reports describing flagrant abuses of human rights in the UK. For instance, Theresia Degener, chair of the United Nations’ committee on the rights of persons with disabilities, has told the UK government that its cuts to social security, social care and other services had caused ‘a human catastrophe’. But the government shrugs off each criticism and the media and civil society quickly move on to the next issue.

It is also worth remembering that, particularly between 2010 and 2015, the Labour party often found itself supporting welfare reforms ‘in principle’ – and that many of those coalition reforms were themselves prefigured by New Labour policies. The infamous ‘benefit thieves’ campaign was an effort by New Labour to appear tough on benefits, but it has played directly into the hands of those wanting to stigmatise poor and disabled people. Benefit fraud was, and remains, statistically insignificant, but when good people fail to resist lies and injustice they risk legitimising them.

Also striking has been the failure of civil society to resist austerity effectively. Despite cuts which have seen, for instance, 44 per cent fewer people receiving adult social care, there has been no powerful and organised campaign to resist these cuts. Local government, the church and charities have sometimes issued critical statements, but they tend to understate the crisis, and after a little flurry, everything goes quiet again. The strongest resistance has come from grassroots organisations like Disabled People Against the Cuts. It is perhaps no coincidence that the best campaigning comes from those not dependent on government funding.

Austerity should end our faith in an inevitable law of social progress and encourage us to question whether the powerful will always act for the common good. If we want to build a society with a real commitment to social justice then we are going to have to focus on making it much more difficult for politicians to exploit people’s fears and prejudice.

We also need to put the protection of human rights – including social and economic rights – at the heart of our legal system. It is essential that we restore the integrity of civil society and reduce its dependency on political patronage to ensure that the voices of those harmed can never be silenced again. **F**

Futurism with a human lens

Alice Martin is impressed by a bold and hopeful vision of an automated future



Alice Martin is head of work and pay at the New Economics Foundation, specialising in the future of work and trade unions

In the first chapter of Aaron Bastani's hopeful new polemic, we meet a series of six pseudo-sci-fi characters going about their lives with the help of tantalising, futuristic technologies – that are in fact not from the future at all: Spotify algorithms, solar farms, commercialised space travel, growth hormones. Think *Black Mirror*, without the sense of dread. They provide a playful run-up for a book whose aim is to illuminate the serious potential of technology to unlock a society based on abundance, not scarcity. According to Bastani, it is politics – not science – that stands between us and this future of plenty.

Bastani points to space exploration as a prime example of where politics has held back the potential of science to create social good. Rather than creating the 'province for all' that it could have, space exploration has instead turned into a new frontier of resource extraction pursued by wealthy elites.

The book argues that the 'third disruption' faced by the human condition is upon us – an information revolution enabled by artificial intelligence and rapid digitalisation. What is different this time around is that, unlike during the agricultural and industrial revolutions, liberation from the scarcity imposed by our political and economic model is now within our reach. Bastani is not only calling time on our current technological epoch, but on capitalism itself. Drawing on cultural theorist Mark Fisher he claims that even the act of reading a book like this, about an automated, communist future, means that the era of 'capitalist realism' (where it's easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism) – is over. This performative trick is canny and sets out the ambitions of the book to pivot us towards the 'what next?', but the claim that society is waking up to the fallacy of the capitalist project is at times embellished with banal arguments that jar with the wider tone, about issues like stagnant pay and the unaffordability of homeownership. Although I agree that many of the promises of neoliberal capitalism have been broken (that 'working hard' will get you a better life, that homeownership brings security), many readers may find it hard to suspend their pessimism about whether this merely signals the start of a new chapter in the everyday oppressions and precarities we are accustomed to.

The most impassioned sections are the detailed presentations of the technological frontiers currently under exploration by the human race: synthetic meat, gene editing, solar power. Albeit open to the charge of techno-fetishism, Bastani provides an accessible and politicised account



Fully Automated Luxury Communism: A Manifesto
Aaron Bastani
Verso Books,
£16.99

of new technologies – a useful contribution towards the political education of readers interested in understanding science and design through the lens of human liberation and oppression. As Anna, a CEO from Sweden (a fictitious persona) puts it: "In the future, lower classes of citizen won't have inferior or less marketable skills, they'll just lack access to personal AI. (...) How do you have a fair labour market when that happens?"

For Bastani, the main political subject being prepped to usher in 'fully automated luxury communism' is not a union-dues paying robot, but a labour movement *against* work. Though Bastani states the need for this movement, he leaves others to do the unpacking about how it will emerge. Surprisingly, the growing support for a shorter working week among trade unions in response to automation doesn't get a mention.

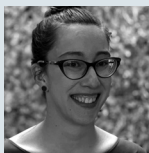
The current swelling of opposition to climate change across wealthy, mass-polluting countries like the United Kingdom and the United States shows how the intersection of the political and the scientific can be a basis for social movements. Whilst this growing movement is making headway in forcing the political class to wake up to the global climate emergency, this book zooms out further (quite literally) and sets its sights on asteroid mining. Some might find this an unhelpful, or even a risky, distraction, but I think that one of Bastani's achievements is to up the ante and challenge the assumption that living sustainably means living with scarcity. What are the progressive potentials offered by solar power beyond the immediate need to decarbonise?

Although Bastani creates a bold vision, there remains some 'creative ambiguity' about how it is we get there. He recognises that the third disruption will take decades to achieve, and provides a shopping list of transitional policies: replacing Carillion-style outsourcing with Preston model procurement, worker-owned enterprise and networked local banks. The inclusion of these pragmatic next steps (ones that progressive policy-makers have promoted for a while) will feel anticlimactic for readers whose minds have been prised open by the utopianism of earlier sections. Nevertheless, this is a charged addition to the new canon of authors seeking to push progressives out of their accustomed cynicism.

The book's futurism with a human lens makes it an appealing read, cogently arguing that an automated world could still be a human one: a world with sentiment and of course power. **F**

Our founding feminists

The pioneering efforts of several early female Fabians have too often been written out of history, writes *Jana Smith Elford*



Jana Smith Elford researches and teaches late 19th century Victorian social movements at Medicine Hat College, Canada

THE FABIAN WOMEN'S Group was established on 14 March 1908 to draw stronger links between the two most vital movements of the time: socialism and women's emancipation. In its first report, the Fabian women involved in this new group took note of the pioneering female Fabians who had come before them. It was because of these women, the Women's Group suggested, that the society as a whole had "become the pioneer socialist body supporting the suffrage agitation".

Although Annie Besant and Beatrice Webb are certainly two of the more well-known early female Fabians, there are a number of feminists that mobilised within a male-dominated Fabian Society from its inception. Pioneering members like Emma Frances Brooke, a collectivist, and Charlotte Wilson, an anarchist, for instance, were drawn to the Fabian Society to discuss, debate, and implement these various theories, and to draw attention to their impact on women, with which they were predominantly concerned. And yet despite their numerous contributions to the making of an egalitarian socialist movement, women were written out of Fabian history even as they were producing it.

By reading early issues of the *Fabian News* – the society's regular newsletter – we can begin to recover patterns of women's activity and hypothesise about the way feminists' ideas circulated within social movements, even though their speeches, tracts, and fiction were marginalised in early and subsequent histories.

In the 1880s, alongside the burgeoning interest in socialist ideas, women's nature and

purpose in society was a hot topic of debate. The 'woman question' or 'sex-question' as it was then called, dealt with issues that ranged widely from marriage, suffrage, and sexual assault, to childcare and women's education and whether they should be supported by the state. Brooke, who authored several fictional books on the subject, also wrote a significant article – *Women and their Sphere* – that predated many more well-known ones on the topic of the woman question. It was published in 1888 in another feminist Fabian's journal – Annie Besant's *Our Corner*. Brooke was instrumental in broadening the understanding of the way particular issues like 'the woman question' were discussed and circulated within and between socialist organisations such as the Fabian Society.

Mallet gave at least 56 lectures on the equal rights of women, women's wages and women and socialism

Brooke, together with other members of the society, worked on a variety of organisational initiatives, including socialist lectures, anarchist speeches, and conversational teas to persuade people to become socialists. Yet the first book of Fabian history, written by Edward Pease – a founding Fabian and secretary of the society – references Brooke only once and makes little mention of other women.

Other feminist Fabians included influential American feminist Harriot Stanton Blatch, Katharine St. John Conway (Glasier) who is better known for her affiliation with the Independent Labour party, and L. T. Mallet, a feminist lecturer and writer.

From 1891 to 1896 Mallet gave at least 56 lectures to various Fabian groups on the equal rights of women, women's wages, and women and socialism, sat on the Fabian executive committee for two terms, and in 1891 was a Progressive Candidate for the London School Board, advocating for an egalitarian national education system funded

by the state. It was in part due to her efforts that a Fabian committee was established to draw up a tract on the woman question, advocating the equal claims of women to all civil and political rights.

In 1893, Mallet published *Dangerous Trades for Women* with William Reeves, which had formed the topic of several of her lectures, and in 1897, along with several other Fabians including Henry Stephens Salt, Isabella Ford, and Joseph Francis Oakeshott, Mallet's work appeared in *Cruelties of Civilization: A Program of Humane Reform*. She was also a regular contributor to the feminist *Women's Penny Paper*, the first women's newspaper written, printed, and published entirely by women.

Outside the Fabian Society, Mallet was a prominent member of the National Liberal Federation, the English Society of Friends of Russian Freedom, the Family Welfare Association, and active on the International Arbitration and Peace Association, a feminist peace organization. Despite advocating for feminism within the Fabian Society and more widely, Mallet appears in no anthologies of feminist history and is absent from any histories of the Fabian Society subsequent to Pease's 1916 *History of the Fabian Society* (which only mentions her twice).

Although the degree of influence of these early feminist Fabians is hard to quantify, their ideas, introduced and reintroduced in the forms of lectures, motions, papers, and committees, were continually circulating within the Fabian Society. Working to amplify the concerns of women, they contributed immeasurably to the nature of social change pursued within the organisation. As they interceded in various areas both within and outside of the society, these feminists played a significant role in influencing wider social change both within the society and beyond. But because these women were not recognised as the leaders of the socialist organisation, their work was overlooked in the first Fabian histories. And due to the fact that current historians draw on past histories, this oversight has been perpetuated. ■

FABIAN QUIZ

ON FIRE: THE BURNING CASE FOR A GREEN NEW DEAL

Naomi Klein



Bestselling author Naomi Klein has been chronicling the economic war waged on both people and planet for over 20 years. She is now making the case for a Green New Deal – explaining how bold climate action can

be a blueprint for a just and thriving society.

Her new book gathers for the first time more than a decade of her impassioned writing, and pairs it with new material on the staggeringly high stakes of our immediate political and economic choices.

These long-form essays show Klein at her most prophetic and philosophical,

investigating the climate crisis not only as a profound political challenge but as a spiritual and imaginative one, as well. Delving into topics ranging from the history of humankind, to rising white supremacy and fortified borders this is a rousing call to action for a planet on the brink.

With reports spanning from the ghostly Great Barrier Reef, to the annual smoke-choked skies of the Pacific Northwest, to post-hurricane Puerto Rico, to a Vatican attempting an unprecedented “ecological conversion,” Klein makes the case that we will rise to the existential challenge of climate change only if we are willing to transform the systems that produced this crisis.

An expansive, far-ranging exploration that sees the battle for a greener world as indistinguishable from the fight for our lives, *On Fire* captures the burning

urgency of the climate crisis, as well as the fiery energy of a rising political movement demanding a catalytic Green New Deal.

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

What is the name of the American congresswoman rallying for a Green New Deal in Washington?

Please email your answer and your address to review@fabian-society.org.uk

Or send a postcard to Fabian Society, Fabian Quiz, 61 Petty France, London, SW1H 9EU

**ANSWERS MUST BE RECEIVED
NO LATER THAN
FRIDAY 9 AUGUST 2019**



Noticeboard

Fabian Society executive committee elections

Nominations are now invited for:

- 10 executive committee members (main ballot)
- 3 local Fabian Society representatives
- Honorary treasurer
- Welsh convenor

Elections will be by postal ballot and electronic ballot of all full national members and local society members. Nominations should be in writing and individuals can nominate themselves. Local society nominations should be made by local societies. Members of the society before 16 May 2019 are eligible to stand and vote in the executive committee elections.

At least two of the 10 national members and one of the three local society members elected must be under the age of 31 at the AGM on Saturday 16 November 2019. There will be no more than five places

for Westminster parliamentarians. Nominees should submit a statement in support of their nomination, including information about themselves and their activities within the society of not more than 70 words.

Nominations should be sent to membership@fabians.org.uk. Please write the position nominated for in the subject line of the email. The closing date for nominations is Friday 16 August 2019.

The ballot will be open from 16 September to 18 October 2019.

Young Fabian and Fabian Women's Network elections

Nominations are also invited for the annual election to the Young Fabian executive, open to any member under the age of 31 on 16 November 2019. Members of the Young Fabians before 16 May 2019 are eligible to stand and vote in the elections. For full details see www.youngfabians.org.uk

The Fabian Women's Network is also seeking nominations for its executive committee. For details

and information about how to get involved, please visit www.fabian-women.co.uk

The deadline for nominations for both committees is Monday 7 September 2019.

Annual General Meeting

The Fabian Society AGM will take place on Saturday 16 November 2019 in central London.

Any full member, national or local, may submit a motion for the AGM by 16 August 2019. Motions will be published in the autumn issue of the Fabian Review and amendments will be invited with a deadline of 12 October 2019. For more information contact membership@fabians.org.uk or 0207 227 4904.

Anniversary

Congratulations and thanks go to Ian Taylor, who this year celebrates 50 years as secretary of Bournemouth and District Fabian Society. In his half century in the role – which he tells the Fabian Review he took up at the age of 23

in 1969 thinking it would be ‘just for three months’ – he has arranged 10 meetings a year, bringing a diverse range of speakers to Bournemouth Fabians, including Denis Healey, Betty Boothroyd, John Smith, Robin Cook, Neil Kinnock, Bishop Trevor Huddleston, Donald Soper and Jeremy Corbyn.

Debbie Sander

Tony Skuse, secretary of Reading and District Fabian Society writes:

Debbie Sander, chair of Reading and District Fabian Society, has sadly passed away. Debbie had an active involvement in Labour politics for more than 40 years, including being a parliamentary candidate. She worked in the Commonwealth Institute after leaving university and always maintained a deep interest in the Global South, especially Africa. Debbie worked as an educational psychologist in the Reading area. She became chair of our local Fabian society seven years ago and was an efficient and much respected chair who will be greatly missed.

Listings

BIRMINGHAM & WEST MIDLANDS

Details and information from Luke John Davies at bhamfabians@gmail.com

BOURNEMOUTH & DISTRICT

21 July: Coach to Tolpuddle Martyrs Rally
Regular meetings are at 7.30pm in the Friends Meeting House, Bournemouth BH5 1AH.
Contact Ian Taylor on 01202 396634 or taylorbournemouth@gmail.com for details

BRIGHTON & HOVE

12 July: Gary Fuller on stopping air pollution, the invisible killer at Lewes Town Hall, BN7 2QS.
Sunday 4 August: annual garden party, 21 September, 5.15pm: Stephen Kinnock MP at Community Base, 113 Queens Rd, Brighton BN1 3XG.
25 October: Lord Steve Bassam on the future of seaside towns.
22 November: Herim Balci on Turkey today. Most meetings at 8pm at Friends Meeting House, Ship St, BN1 1AF
Contact secretary Ralph Bayley at ralphbayley@gmail.com

CENTRAL LONDON

Re-forming with a new cycle of meetings on the 3rd Wednesday of the month. Meetings at the Fabian Society, 61 Petty France SW1H 9EU. Details and enquiries to Michael Weatherburn – LondonFabians@gmail.com

CHISWICK & WEST LONDON

26 September: AGM and speaker Nicky Flynn, chief executive, The Upper Room homelessness charity. 8pm in Chiswick Town Hall. Details of meetings from Alison Baker at a.m.baker@blueyonder.co.uk

COLCHESTER

Meetings in the Hexagonal Room, Quaker Meeting House, 6, Church St, Colchester. 7 for 7.30pm. Details from Maurice Austin at maurice.austin@phoncoop.coop

COUNTY DURHAM

All meetings, 12.15pm – 2pm at Ushaw College (new venue) DH7 9RH. £4 including lunch. Details from Prof Alan Townsend 01388 746479

CROYDON & SUTTON

50 Waverley Avenue, Sutton SM1 3JY
Future speaker: Seb Dance MEP.
Information from Emily Brothers – info@emilybrothers.com

DARTFORD & GRAVESHAM

Meetings at 8pm in the Rose and Crown, West Hill
For details of all meetings, contact Deborah Stoate at deborah.stoate@fabians.org.uk

EAST LOTHIAN

Details of meetings from Mark Davidson at m.d.davidson@me.com

FINCHLEY

Society re-forming – contact David Beere djbeere@btinternet.com for details

GRIMSBY

Regular meetings. Contact Pat Holland at hollandpat@hotmail.com

HARTLEPOOL

New society.
Contact Helen Howson at secretary@hartlepoolfabians@gmail.com

HAVERING

23 July: Claire Ainsley, executive director, Joseph Rowntree Foundation on how the working-class vote in the North went Tory. Contact David Marshall for details at haveringfabians@outlook.com

HORNSEY & WOOD GREEN

Meetings on 15 July, 12 September and 11 November. Details from Mark Cooke at hwgfabians@gmail.com

ISLINGTON

Regular meetings.
Contact Adeline Au at siewyin.au@gmail.com

NORTH EAST LONDON

For details of speakers and venues, contact Nathan Ashley at NELondonFabians@outlook.com

NEWHAM

For details of regular meetings, please contact Rohit Dasgupta at rhit_svu@hotmail.com

NORTHUMBRIA AREA

For details of meetings, please contact Pat Hobson at pathobson@hotmail.com

OXFORD

Monthly discussion meetings on 2nd Tuesday at different venues around Oxford, plus monthly reading group. Regular meetings and events. Contact David Addison at admin@oxfordfabians.org.uk

PETERBOROUGH

All meetings at the Dragonfly Hotel, Thorpe Meadows PE3 6GA at 8pm. Details from Brian Keegan at brian@briankeegan.demon.co.uk

PORTSMOUTH

Details of meetings from Nita Cary at dewicary@yahoo.com

READING & DISTRICT

24 July, 8pm: David Cooper on novel ideas in public ownership. Great Expectations Hotel, 33 London Rd, Reading RG1 4PS. Details from Tony Skuse at tony@skuse.net

RUGBY

Details about future meetings from John Goodman at rugbyfabians@myphone.coop

SOUTHAMPTON AREA

Regular meetings. Details from Eliot Horn at eliot.horn@btinternet.com

SOUTH TYNESIDE

Regular meetings at Lookout Community Pub, Fort St, South Shields. Details of meetings from Paul Freeman at southtynesidefabians@gmail.com

SUFFOLK

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

TONBRIDGE & TUNBRIDGE WELLS

Regular meetings. Contact Martin Clay at martin.clay@btinternet.com

WALSALL

If you're interested in getting involved in relaunching the Walsall Fabian Society, please contact Ian Robertson at robertson@hotmail.co.uk

YORK & DISTRICT

Details from Jack Mason at jm2161@york.ac.uk

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 - a minimum wage of £10 per hour, 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.



**TO DOWNLOAD OUR RETAIL INDUSTRIAL
STRATEGY DOCUMENT OR FIND OUT MORE
ABOUT OUR CAMPAIGN PLEASE VISIT:
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or call **0800 030 80 30**

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