

CAMPAIGN BRIEFING

CLPD CAMPAIGN for LABOUR PARTY DEMOCRACY

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Editor: Dave Beadle
Design and layout: Mulberry Design

Enquiries: info@clpd.org.uk

Celebrating Over 50 Years of CLPD

Question marks over Labour's economics

Andrew Fisher examines the vulnerabilities of Labour's dependency on growth.

Starmers green cornerstone

When Keir Starmer announced his "mission" for the UK to achieve "the highest sustained growth in the G7", the cornerstone policy was "a Green Prosperity Plan that will provide the catalytic investment needed to become a clean energy superpower".

At Conference in 2023, Starmer assured delegates he would "speed



ahead" with green investment, lambasting Rishi Sunak for rowing back on his commitments. Labour's Green Prosperity Plan had been launched at Conference in 2021, promising an "additional £28bn of capital investment in our country's green transition for each and every year of this decade", funding new energy infrastructure, green transport, and better home insulation.

But in February this year, the plan was decimated and funding stripped out. And when the manifesto was published the plan was left with just an extra £4.7bn investment. The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) think-tank said it means "both the Conservatives and Labour plan to reduce government investment over the

next parliamentary term."

'Growth' and 'change'

'Growth' was the buzzword of Labour's election campaign. That and 'change'. It would certainly be a change to have some decent economic growth. Since the banking crash, the UK economy has grown by only 1% a year on average – the worst period for growth since before the Second World War.

But with only a threadbare green investment plan, does Labour have a plan for growth? Its mission remains the highest sustained growth in the G7. Its argument rests on two claims: (1) the mere fact of having some stable

(cont. on p3)

A victory in Scotland... for now

Katy Clark describes how Scotland rejected the Tories and the SNP, and how Labour must now avoid a similar fate.

We recovered in Scotland, but by default

After 14 years of brutal Tory rule, we finally have a Labour Government and no doubt most people in Scotland, along with the rest of the UK, will be celebrating the departure of the Tories.



Scotland hasn't voted for a Tory government since 1955. Indeed the desire to end Tory rule in Scotland and the wish for social justice were the main drivers of much of the support for the 'Yes' campaign in 2014. The SNP then attracted much of that support, with the subsequent loss of all but one of Labour's MPs in Scotland at the 2015 General Election (GE). Scottish Labour has struggled to recover.

The Tories clearly lost the 2024 GE: people wanted to kick them out. However, the main feature of the GE across the UK wasn't the increase in Labour's vote but a collapse of the Tory vote, while Scottish Labour saw a big increase in votes and did significantly better than it has for many years. Our

share of the vote rose 16.7% compared to 2019 – a marked difference to the rest of the UK, where the party's share mostly held up (or fell) rather than increased.

For the first time since 2010, Scottish Labour beat the SNP in a Westminster election, winning back swathes of seats lost in the post-referendum battering of 2015. But a large part of what happened was SNP collapse. People didn't want to vote for the Tories and didn't want to vote for the SNP. Both governments were toxic. While Scottish Labour put on 340,000 more votes than in 2019, the SNP lost half a million. Turnout dropped as many

(cont. on p2)

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(Katy Clark cont. from previous page)

disillusioned former SNP supporters stayed at home.

The rejection of the SNP

The SNP won the 2021 Scottish Parliament elections arguing they would deliver a COVID recovery and because of the perceived competence of Nicola Sturgeon. That has now taken a battering.

It was a dramatic message to a party which has been in government for 17 years and in recent years has suffered a succession of scandals from which it's unlikely to recover in the short term. Since Nicola Sturgeon stepped down as First Minister, the party has changed leader twice, seen its coalition agreement with the Scottish Greens collapse, been investigated for potential financial improprieties, and been riven by divisions over its approach to independence, its relationship with the Greens, and gender reform legislation amongst other issues.

Meanwhile, the SNP's long term mismanagement of key public services has taken its toll. While the Scottish Government points to its record of ameliorating Tory austerity in key areas, particularly welfare, it has failed to embark on genuine progressive tax reforms that could reverse years of underinvestment. It's unwilling to take on vested interests, and failed to deliver the radical reforms needed in areas where it does have power. For example, despite having full responsibility for land taxation, it's made no significant proposals despite the massive potential for such measures in Scotland.

As a result, many of the failures south of the border are failures here too. One in four children are in poverty. Almost one in six Scots are on an NHS waiting list. Over 100,000 houses lie empty during a housing emergency. Important climate targets are being missed. And industrial relations in key sectors like education have never been so abysmal.

Independence is still an issue

And yet, even as SNP support has collapsed to around a third of the electorate, the number of people who support independence is more or less the same as it was in 2014. Polling consistently bears out that 20-30% of



Photo: Reinhold Möller

Scottish Labour voters would vote 'Yes' to independence if a referendum were held tomorrow.

A great many of these will be traditional left-leaning voters from Labour's former heartlands who switched to the SNP and have just voted Labour again. We now have a huge opportunity to reconnect with the people of Scotland, but we know this support is clearly conditional and we take nothing for granted.

We must deliver on our promises

This Labour Government has to deliver radical change which addresses the issues facing working class people in Scotland, or it will face the same reckoning from Scotland's volatile electorate, as the SNP has just received and as Labour did before them.

Many policies announced in Labour's King's Speech will be welcomed in Scotland. GB Energy is to be based here, which will bring vital green investment, jobs, and infrastructure (see also p15). Scottish Labour MPs

also campaigned heavily on the New Deal for Workers, the biggest levelling-up of workers' rights in a generation (see p8). This was a policy which went down well on the doorstep, particularly in de-industrialised areas, and unsurprisingly so when you consider that trade union membership, whilst still far below what it was in its heyday, is recovering more rapidly in Scotland than anywhere else in Britain.

Delivering these promises cannot mean just managing public services better and growing the economy in a way which benefits Scotland. We need to redistribute wealth and power towards working people, something neither the Conservatives nor the SNP have ever managed to achieve in office.

The Scottish Parliament elections are less than two years away. If we want to be trusted in restoring our public services, and with the wide range of devolved responsibilities in Scotland, we need to do more than simply expose the SNP's failures. Westminster must provide a clear alternative by governing competently and unapologetically in the interest of working people.

At a UK level we need to deliver the change promised, the investment and growth needed for the economy, and the jobs and opportunities so many parts of Scotland crave. We need an ambitious strategy to end poverty and ensure all our communities are both producing and sharing in our wealth.

Labour must deliver for the people of Scotland if we're to win again in the next Scottish Parliament elections.

Katy Clark is MSP West Scotland Region.

Labour Conference 2024: CLPD's Yellow Pages

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(Andrew Fisher cont. from p1)

government after years of Tory chaos; and (2) some liberalisation of planning laws (especially around housing and energy infrastructure) which will trigger greater private investment and therefore create jobs.

This might work. Whether it's enough to generate "the highest sustained growth in the G7" is less certain. However, two prerequisites for sustained stable growth remain unresolved in Labour's plans: rising investment and rising wages.

The lack of public investment...

The UK has long lagged behind other nations in terms of public investment. Labour's diluted investment plans are now focused on leveraging in extra private investment, but that is always the way: where public investment leads, the private sector follows. So it becomes a question of scale: is what Labour is proposing sufficient to stimulate sustained higher growth?



to reduce hours or give up work entirely to care for loved ones. Investing in public services could also stimulate growth – skills training needs a massive boost after the huge cuts of the Tory years. Labour's plans, as spelled out in the manifesto, mean more austerity for public services, which depresses growth (see p5).

Taking a punt on planning laws

Labour is ultimately taking a punt on the liberalisation of planning laws. That assumes it can overcome local opposition to building on green belt land, and deliver onshore wind and other infrastructure – and that private investors have the labour force to deliver it. With Labour allocating no extra resources to skills training and promising to cut immigration, it's not obvious that the capacity to expand significantly actually exists.

All in all, there are huge question marks about Labour's strategy for growth.

Andrew Fisher is the former Executive Director of Policy for the Labour Party, 2016-2019.

...And low wages

Real wages fell under the last Government. In an economy that is 80% service sector, if people don't have much spare money in their pockets they can't spend it and the economy doesn't grow. Businesses large and small tighten their belts and cut costs rather than invest. That is a big part of the problem. Without boosting wages or social security benefits (there is no money allocated in Labour's 'fully costed' manifesto to do so), or significantly boosting public investment, it's hard to confidently predict sustained higher growth.

Likewise, the lack of available public services means more people who could be in work are trapped on NHS waiting lists, and due to the lack of social care many people are being forced

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"Quote Unquote"

"The Nuffield Trust reckons that the current spending plans of the new Labour government for the NHS will mean a further period of austerity. Total health spending annual growth of 0.8% would result in the next four years being the tightest in NHS history under the Labour pledges – tighter even than the former Tory coalition government's 'austerity' period."

Michael Roberts, economist, Jul 2024



Bitebacks

"What would you say is the biggest reason you are voting Labour at the coming General Election?"

To get the Tories out: 48%
Keir Starmer's Leadership: 1%

YouGov poll Jun-Jul 2024

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The alternative to Tory asylum-seeker policies

Diane Abbott calls for a network of safe and legal routes.

A cynical Tory distraction

Tory policies attacking asylum-seekers were immoral, illegal, and unworkable. But they weren't designed to be practical. Instead, they have



long been part of the Tory arsenal of tricks and distractions designed to draw attention away from their other policies. It has been the most cynical type of politics, and their impracticality was highlighted by the fact that there were no Rwanda deportation flights ahead of the election. In reality, the deportation flights were designed to appeal to the Tory base, rather than to be an effective policy.

In their Alice in Wonderland politics, Parliament passed a law to assert that Rwanda is a safe country because the law says it is a safe country. We also had the spectacle of ministers railing against European courts when human rights abuses carried out during deportations were blocked by courts in this country. One of the strangest aspects of this reactionary charade is that it was frequently claimed that there is no alternative to the policy. This is completely untrue,

and the incoming Labour Government rightly put a stop to it immediately.

We are not being 'swamped'

First, we must remember that seeking asylum is a right given to all. It goes back to ancient times, so that in the Christian world it was enough only for a refugee to touch the church door to be granted asylum. Other cultures have similarly enshrined rights. In the modern era, the right to asylum is set out in Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Britain was not just one of the signatories but one of the authors of the Declaration, which was the world's response to the horrors of World War II, and specifically to the Holocaust. It was the codification of the slogan 'never again'. Opponents of the right to asylum for the victims of war or persecution seem to have forgotten all this.

And contrary to Tory assertions, most asylum applications are successful. Two-thirds of initial applications are granted. On appeal (of applications initially refused), the proportion of successful applicants rises to over three-quarters. And the notion we are being 'swamped' by asylum-seekers is untrue and offensive. Around 60,000 people a year are granted asylum because they are legally entitled to it, far less than in other countries.

The need for safe and legal routes

There is a long-standing alternative that I and others have advocated for some time. It is backed by nearly all the charities and NGOs working in this area. It can be reduced to a mantra precisely so it can be readily understood and reiterated: the establishment of safe and legal routes for asylum-seekers.

In practical terms, establishing safe and legal routes for asylum-seekers means the creation of processing centres for asylum applications in a number of countries. There would be a network of such centres near the main conflict zones, and successful claimants would then be legally entitled to enter this country and could be given assistance to do so. France, for one, has long made it clear that it is willing to allow such a centre to be created, and it has been British ministers who have previously balked at the idea.

Processing claims in this way would then overcome the compulsion to cross the Channel in small boats, one of the most hazardous possible ends to a long and dangerous journey for people seeking asylum.

Our alternative is practical, moral and workable. It upholds the best traditions of our society.

Diane Abbot is MP for Hackney North and Stoke Newington.

Military spending must not be taken as read

Carol Turner questions whether Labour's defence review should be the exception to fiscal responsibility.

Has 'Securonomics' overlooked defence?

The General Election was fought on the need for fiscal responsibility to get Britain's economy back on track. Every policy hint, let alone manifesto promise, had to be



costed; and every news outlet engaged in fact-checking the cost of Party policies.

Until it came to military spending, that is. Rachel Reeves' 'Securonomics' appears to have overlooked an important area of Labour's manifesto commitments: to raise military spending to 2.5%. "Our commitment to the UK's nuclear deterrent is absolute. It is a vital safeguard for the UK and our NATO allies", the Labour manifesto said. "Labour will conduct a Strategic Defence Review within our first year in government, and we will set out the path to spending 2.5% of GDP on defence."

Almost indecent haste

Within two weeks of taking office, Keir Starmer laid out the terms of the Strategic Defence Review (SDR), with a report due in the first half of 2025. Overseen by Defence Secretary John Heaney, it's being conducted by three external reviewers, led by former Defence Secretary & NATO Secretary General Lord George Robertson, with former US presidential advisor Dr Fiona Hill, and former Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff General Sir Richard Barrons.

(cont. on next page)

Say no to 'permanent austerity'

Matt Willgress outlines the 'Workers Can't Wait' campaign.

A conspiracy of silence

The General Election took place in the middle of the deepest cost-of-living crisis in generations. Councils are going bust. Poverty is spiralling. Homelessness is out of control. There are regular warnings that unemployment might jump dramatically. And people's living costs keep going up, whilst wages don't follow.

Yet throughout the campaign there was almost a conspiracy of silence regarding the depth of this humanitarian crisis across both the front benches. This extended to much of the mainstream media which was more interested in helping Nigel Farage stoke up hatred against refugees than shining a light on the 18% of the population in absolute poverty.

The whole political establishment is intent on never-ending austerity and neo-liberalism, as reflected by Rachel Reeves' 'fiscal framework,' which has worked its logic through to the watering-down of policy after policy which could start tackling the cost-of-living crisis.



Not even a sticking plaster

Yes, there is a commitment to an injection of cash into public services that would see an extra 40,000 NHS appointments a week, an additional 6,500 teachers in state schools, and 13,000 police and community support officers. And of course these pledges are welcome, especially after 14 years of Tory misrule. But an objective assessment of the depth of the crises we face shows this is not even a sticking plaster on the damage austerity has done.

And context also matters when discussing whether austerity and the cuts this means will continue. Just days into the election campaign, Keir Starmer talked of how abolishing the two-child benefit cap "is not our policy for a reason [as] we are not going to be able to afford to scrap it because of the damage the Tories have done." In other words, Labour will maintain a flagship austerity policy that condemns millions to poverty (see pp1, 3).

Workers can't wait

Now, with Labour in government, we can't allow a consensus for 'permanent austerity'. It's the route to economic and social catastrophe, and to a further rise of the far-right. We therefore need to urgently mobilise for policies that address the depth of the cri-

ses we face. With more detailed in our online petition, 'Workers Can't Wait' demands the following 10 measures:

- Britain needs a pay rise, including the Minimum Wage.
- A social security system to end poverty.
- Control costs, including energy and rents.
- Stop the corporate rip-off, including public ownership of key services.
- Extra resources to create universal, comprehensive public services.
- Homes for all – fix the housing crisis.
- The right to food.
- Decent jobs for all.
- Defend and extend our right to organise.
- End austerity for good.

Please add your name in support of 'Workers Can't Wait,' take the policies to labour movement organisations and community groups for endorsement, and keep mobilising for investment, not cuts. Join over 22,000 others and add your name in support to these demands at www.change.org/p/workers-can-t-wait-urgent-action-to-tackle-the-cost-of-living-crisis-now.

Matt Willgress is the National Organiser for the Labour Assembly Against Austerity and a member of the CLPD Executive.

(cont. from previous page)

In line with the trend of the past decade, the SDR's terms of reference include protecting against threats to UK economic growth and prosperity, as well as more traditional dangers such as 'war in Europe' and 'conflict in the Middle East'.

The parameters within which contributions are invited make clear this is no Defence Review of the type led by Emily Thornberry for Jeremy Corbyn in 2016. The SDR will consider the following:

- The efficiency and effectiveness of the nuclear programme, within the government's "total commitment to the independent UK nuclear deterrent";

- Enhancing the UK's contribution to the NATO alliance and sustaining a 'NATO first' defence policy;
- Ways to maintain the UK's defence ties to the Indo Pacific, the Gulf, and the Middle East; and
- The path to spending 2.5% GDP on defence.

The latter, we're told, "will be dealt with at a future fiscal event", presumably meaning the announcement of a spending commitment outside the 2025 budget.

No news on how we engage with the review

The SDR will "engage widely across the defence community" – from the general public, as well as academics,

Parliament, and the UK's closest allies and partners, especially in NATO. However, despite the deadline of the end of September, a call for submissions wasn't issued until the very end of August.

Local parties and labour movement organisations have every interest in intervening in this process if the Government is to really make a difference to the cost-of-living crisis and the lives of the majority. Military priorities must be evaluated, not taken as read, and military spending must be subject to the same fiscal rules as everything else.

Carol Turner is a member of Vauxhall & Camberwell Green CLP, Labour CND, and the CLPD Executive.



Industrial action works

Mick Whelan describes how strong unions continue to defend workers' rights.

Strikes work

Strikes, they say, don't work. Well, that's what the Tories – and right-wing commentators in papers like The Sun, Daily Mail, and Daily Telegraph – would like you to believe. But the truth is that strikes do work. They always have. And they always will. That's why employers – and the Tories that stand behind the bosses – don't like them.

Our dispute with 16 train operating companies began back in June 2022 when we first balloted our members for industrial action because they hadn't had a pay rise since April 2019. It was only six and a half months later and, more pertinently, after six one-day strikes that the train companies finally made us an offer. Then Secretaries of State for Transport Grant Shapps, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, and Mark Harper have all walked through the revolving door at the Department for Transport in the last two years and the Rail Minister, whether Wendy Morton, Kevin Foster, or Huw Merriman, kept parroting the party line that 'ASLEF should come to the table'. Well, we did. But the table was bare. The companies put nothing on the table until we showed our collective determination to win a rise by going on strike.

It's that solidarity – collective action – which employers hate. Because, at heart, many bosses are Victorian mill owners who would like to hire and fire as they see fit. They love the idea of the foreman walking along the wharf in the morning saying, "You, you, and you are hired. There's no work for the rest of you." They don't like the 'burden', as they see it, of employing men and women. Of paying proper wages. Taxes. National Insurance and pensions. They love the gig economy, false self-employment, and zero hours contracts which the Labour Party in its New Deal for Working People has promised to ban. Bosses like to claim that 'Zero hours contracts offer work-



ers flexibility.' But not decent terms and conditions, employment rights, or proper, and secure, jobs.

Fighting MSLS

Because our strikes were successful – in bringing the railway to a standstill – the Tory Government rushed through its Minimum Service Levels (MSL) Act at the end of last year. It had nothing to do with providing a minimum service to the public and everything to do with providing maximum problems for trade unions. Threatening us with fines if we put a foot wrong and, fundamentally, trying to undermine the effectiveness of industrial action and our ability to protect our members.

That's why we fought so hard – and, so far, so successfully – against the implementation of MSLS on the railway. When LNER said it intended to issue work notices to members, for the day we were due to strike, we immediately put on another five days of strikes – more industrial action, as we have promised, to ensure the same effect – which prompted the company to see sense and back down.

We did it not just for train drivers, but for every worker here in Britain. Because we don't believe in forced labour. We believe in the right to strike. And that strikes are effective.

Earlier this year, the train operating companies reached out to us for 'talks about talks' to try to resolve our pay dispute. They would not have done that if we had not taken industrial action. Yes, that's right. Strikes work.

Time to repeal anti-union legislation

The tectonic plates of British politics shifted on 4th July with the Labour



landslide, and the opportunity to give hope, inspiration, and aspiration to millions cannot be underestimated. There is, of course, a massive task, with 14 million in poverty after 14 years of Tory economic incompetence.

We now need to make sure this Labour government will make work pay, grow the economy, and give ordinary people their voice back after the headlong rush to authoritarian autocracy.

We look forward to the railways being brought back into public ownership – a manifesto pledge which the new Labour Government is already intent on delivering – and we look forward to Keir delivering *A New Deal for Working People* (see p8). That means MSLS will be gone, 'fire and rehire' will be gone, zero-hours contracts will be gone, agency workers will be gone, political fund ballots will be gone, and workers will have employment rights from day one, and the right to organise that is so important in a democratic, civilised, and socialist society.

Mick Whelan is General Secretary of ASLEF, the train drivers' trade union, a member of the Labour Party NEC, and Chair of Labour Unions.



ASLEF
the train drivers' union

"Quote Unquote"

"We need action on the causes of the cost-of-living crisis. Repealing anti-union legislation and awarding proper public sector pay rises to rectify a lost decade of austerity would go a long way to repair the damage done. This could be paid for with taxes on the bumper corporate profits that are the real drivers of inflation."



Diane Abbott, Aug 2023

How do we fix the crisis in education?

Ed Harlow examines the Government's sizeable in-tray.

Resetting the relationship

Labour is back in government after 14 years of Conservative chaos in education. 14 years of funding cuts, pay restraint, narrowing curricula,



ever more regressive assessment systems, privatisation through the academies programme, and a fractured relationship between the DfE and the profession, led by a revolving cast of education ministers.

Sadly, for millions of children, it will be too late. 14 years is the time children spend in schools between early years and A-levels. Children born in 2006, just before the financial crisis that ushered in the era of perpetual austerity, started school a few months after Michael Gove was installed as Secretary of State for Education in 2010. Those children have recently left school, and many are weighing up whether a lifetime of debt is a worthwhile price to continue their education.

Since the election, there has been a noticeable attempt to reset the relationship between government and the profession. Meetings with the General Secretaries of the four education unions were followed by open conversations with the profession. This is a big step. It's hard to overstate how toxic the relationship had become between the profession and the ever-changing Secretaries of State under the Tories. Gillian Keegan's final act was to leave the School Teachers Review Body report sitting on her desk.

Pay is the starting point...

The announcement from Rachel Reeves that Labour would honour the 5.5% set out by the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) was welcome, as was the £1.2bn to fund it. But the STRB's rationale for the rise was that private sector pay had risen by this much. So, despite this being above inflation for the first time in a generation, this is essentially treading water

and will not be enough to arrest and reverse the deep and wide recruitment and retention crisis.

Longer term, many in education would prefer to see an end to the pay review system altogether, and return to collective bargaining with the unions. Whatever happens, there will need to be a timely pay correction if teaching is to remain a viable profession for future graduates.

...But there's a lot more

Pay is not the only issue driving the recruitment and retention crisis in schools. Workload is also a major factor, driven by the culture of fear and high stakes accountability that emanates from Ofsted. Labour has promised to reform Ofsted and to replace one-word assessments with a report card system. However, many in education feel that Ofsted is beyond reform and abolition is needed. Nobody is seriously arguing for there not to be an inspectorate, but a conversation around the purpose and operation of that inspectorate is overdue. In its current form, it has no demonstrable impact on standards in schools, but contributes massively to a mental health crisis in education and unmanageable workloads. Many would prefer a supportive, collaborative system of school improvement.

Labour has already committed to a review of the curriculum, the results of which will be crucial. The curriculum has dramatically narrowed over the last decade as the English Baccalaureate (EBACC) and school accountability measures such as Progress 8 - key pillars of Michael Gove and Nick Gibb's



reforms - have taken their toll on the uptake in the arts, PE, technology, and other vocational subjects deemed unworthy of inclusion. The primary curriculum has been driven by ever more dogmatic approaches to teaching, and ever more focus on English and Maths brought on by SATs pressure.

Of course, schools are not islands and must work in the context and communities in which they sit. Child poverty rates soared to shameful levels under the Conservatives, and alongside the decimation of essential front-line services, schools have been left to fill the void time and again. Put simply, hungry children do not learn well. A commitment to eradicate child poverty should be the core aim of any Labour policy (see also p11).

... Including clear structural issues

Clear structural issues remain in education. There is a strong argument to return all schools to local democratic control and to end the academies programme, but this must be a long-term goal given the decimation of local education authorities. Removing the threat of forced academisation, however, could be done immediately and would help to alleviate the pressure caused by a punitive Ofsted system.

There will be a lot of goodwill within the profession towards the new Government, but much of what needs to happen is contingent on funding. It should be an ambition of the Government to increase overall education spending and a commitment to raise it to 5% of GDP (from the current 4.2%) would be a worthy aim. And with half a million fewer children in schools by the end of this parliament it is high time we revisited per pupil funding, which acts to the detriment of fixed costs such as school maintenance.

There will be sympathy for Bridget Phillipson and her team, given the scale of the challenge and the number of issues that need urgent attention. But swift progress will be expected by most in the profession. Any return to the distrust and division fostered by her numerous Tory predecessors in the role must be avoided at all costs.

Ed Harlow is National Education Union Junior Vice-President.

What the Employment Rights Bill should deliver

Jeff Slee outlines the promises of Labour's New Deal for Working People and what's still needed.

Welcome changes to improve workers' rights...

Trade unions have generally welcomed the Labour Government's commitment to introduce an Employment Rights Bill, which will put into law the New Deal for Working People agreed by the Party leadership and affiliated unions on 24th May.



At the time of writing, the Bill has not been published. But announcements so far suggest workers and their unions will see many beneficial changes to employment law, including the following:

- Repeal of the Trade Union Act 2016, ending the requirement for unions to pass thresholds of 50% turnout, and 40% voting 'Yes' in industrial action ballots; unions need only give one week's notice of industrial action instead of two; and won't have to re-ballot every 6 months during long disputes. Other measures to hinder trade unions will also go.

- Repeal of the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act, which obliged unions in specified industries (such as education, health, and transport) to guarantee that enough members will work during a strike to run a certain level of service.

- Unions' right to use electronic (online) balloting, an issue the TUC and unions have been demanding for many years. Our experience in the RMT is that electronic ballots of members (such as on matters not covered under the anti-trade union acts) achieve higher turnout in a shorter time than postal balloting. Even with the repeal of thresholds for ballots on industrial action, higher turnouts give unions more moral force when negotiating with employers and in the media. And electronic balloting could increase turnout in union elec-

tions, which have usually been under 20%. The New Deal document also promised workplace ballots and we wait to see what the Bill says about this.

- Easier rules for union recognition, and therefore for collective bargaining over pay, jobs, conditions, etc. And unions' right of access to workplaces to recruit and organise. At present, when an employer does not want to recognise a union, it must win a ballot of the workers concerned. And to get a ballot, a union has to show evidence that a majority of workers are likely to support recognition – not easy when the union isn't even allowed on site (as the GMB experienced in its campaign at Amazon in Coventry).

- A minimum wage which will reflect the cost of living for the first time. And it will include 18-20 year olds, currently on a lower amount.

- Protection against unfair dismissal from Day One, instead of the current two years.

- Parental leave and sick pay rights from Day One.

- The end of 'fire and rehire' practices whereby employers can dismiss their workforce then offer to re-employ them on worse pay and conditions.

- A ban on "exploitative" zero-hour contracts.

- Sector-wide collective bargaining in social care, meaning that all unions and employers have to agree minimum pay and conditions for the whole sector. This hinders individual companies using lower pay and worse conditions to compete for contracts.

...But with some reservations

Unite the Union, the only union which didn't sign up to the New Deal document, has criticised the New Deal for its retreats from earlier commitments,

and for how much is left open to consultation with business bosses:

- Repeal of the 2016 anti-union act still fails to address many other restrictions on unions' ability to take action.

- It will still allow 'fire and rehire' when there is "genuinely no alternative".

- The inclusion of "exploitative" to Labour's earlier pledge to ban all zero-hour contracts raises questions about what protection there will be.

- At the moment, Labour's earlier commitment to sector-wide collective bargaining has been rowed back to only cover social care.

Meanwhile, after Angela Rayner led Labour's commitment to this New Deal over the last four years, unions will also be concerned that responsibility for the Bill has been passed on to Jonathan Reynolds as the new Secretary of State for Business and Trade.

Unions will be demanding the Employment Rights Bill must include all the promises made in Labour's New Deal document, as well as the best protection for workers in all those areas which remain the subject of consultation with bosses and unions.



Jeff Slee is a member of Burnley CLP, a retired railworker, and former member of the RMT's National Executive Committee.

"Quote Unquote"

"Distancing himself from the unions and sidelining internal democracy risks Sir Keir becoming isolated from the rest of the movement"

Guardian Editorial, Jul 2024

The General Election

Labour must now deliver

Mike Phipps analyses the numbers behind Labour's victory.

A landslide with only 34% of the vote

The July General Election was a massive Labour landslide and a humiliation for the Tories – but far from an endorsement of Starmerism. Labour won with just 34% of the popular vote, lower than under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership in 2017 or 2019. Turnout was also important: at under 60%, the second lowest in a century, even lower if one includes people not registered. And an estimated 400,000 were turned away because they lacked appropriate voter ID.

This is partly a verdict on the entire political class as untrustworthy and even indistinguishable. Focus groups told pollsters they had no faith in politicians, nor in any party to sort out the problems the country faces.

Factionalist scheming cost the Party seats

The election of four new Independent MPs, who took a clear stand against the Israeli genocide against Gaza, and four Greens, alongside Jeremy Corbyn in Islington North, underlines the importance of candidates with deep roots in their local communities. As Asad Rehman pointed out: "The idea that Labour can safely ignore its progressive voters and tack to the right to win votes is no longer tenable."

The Labour apparatus's pursuit of factional feuds with the left also cost the Party seats. The last-minute deselection of Faiza Shaheen in Chingford was a prime example. "It is self-evident that if Faiza Shaheen had not been undemocratically and bureaucratically taken out by Labour's leadership she would have won easily," noted former top Party advisor Simon Fletcher. "This kind of machine politics has to stop."

Leicester, another focus of leadership factionalism against Party members, also saw Labour losses – and not just Shadow Cabinet member Jonathan Ashworth. Leicester East, held



by Labour for 37 years, elected a Tory MP on a night when the party was trounced elsewhere.

Meanwhile, Diane Abbott's victory in retaining her candidacy and subsequent re-election as Labour MP for Hackney North should not be underestimated. The adverse and highly visible publicity generated by the leadership's clumsy plotting against Diane may well have halted its attempts to remove left candidates elsewhere.

The threat from the extreme right

Nor should we ignore Reform – or pander to its agenda. UK Director of More in Common Luke Tryl tweeted, "If voter disillusionment is not now addressed, this may be our France 2017 election." In 2017, the French National Rally got eight seats. This year they won over 140 (see pp14-15).

Holding the Government to account

The agenda now moves ahead to a Labour Government with a huge majority. In the face of crises in healthcare, the cost of living, and climate, the expectation is that the new Government must become more radical and be prepared to spend if it is to deliver effectively – and raise the money to do so.

The task for the left is twofold. First, we must advance the policy agenda, building alliances with the trade unions to win progressive policies. The campaign to overturn the two-child

benefit cap shows how this can be done (see p11).

At the same time, we have to link up across progressive parties and Independents and connect to the growing movement outside the Party. To do that, we will need to be open-minded and inclusive and campaign together on key issues locally to show that Labour's grassroots is central to the task of holding the new government to account.

One thing is clear: if Labour fails to deliver, the new Government could be swept aside just as dramatically as it came in. As Labour National Executive Committee (NEC) member Mish Rahman tweeted: "There is no such thing as a safe seat anymore... Labour have to earn every vote in every election, no more throwing communities under a bus."

Mike Phipps is a member of Queens Park and Maida Vale CLP and the CLPD Executive.

"Quote Unquote"

"If we are to protect the universal service that Royal Mail has provided for centuries, it's clear it needs to be brought back into public ownership where it can serve the public and not just act as a cash cow for private shareholders."

Richard Burgon MP, National-World.com, May 2023

A Podcast for the Labour Left

THE LABOUR LEFT PODCAST



A year ago at the 2023 Conference Bryn Griffiths launched the monthly Labour Left Podcast as a spin-off from Labour Hub (see p23) to help rejuvenate a broad, pluralist, and thinking Labour left.

Topics have included CLPD's fight for Party democracy, the failure of Thatcherism; and slavery and colonialism.

You can find all episodes at: www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6OoOmRsNNbCsHy_vtj-DI4KuHLLoOp11, search for Labour Left Podcast on your podcast provider of choice, or just scan the QR code.



Palestine needs a change of policy

Hugh Lanning outlines the actions we must now demand from the Labour Government.

Israel's reputation is in tatters

Israel's genocidal war on Gaza has highlighted to millions the significance of the decades-long struggle for Palestinian rights and statehood, and has also put the issue at centre stage for the new Labour Government.



Through its actions in Gaza and the West Bank, and its continual refusal to take heed of the United Nations (UN), the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and many other calls for a ceasefire, Israel has totally isolated itself internationally, including amongst many former supporters. Apparently, this is even stretching the patience of Joe Biden – although not enough to result in any meaningful action or pressure. All in all, Israel has torn to shreds its much-cultivated image as the 'only democracy' in the Middle East. And, nearly a year later, any pretence at 'self-defence' has long since passed.

An issue that matters to voters

Meanwhile the UK has been increasingly isolated – under the Tory Government, and now Labour. Despite latter-day statements in favour of a ceasefire from Labour's front-bench, these came far too late to assuage the anger of the millions who were watching the carnage on their televisions.

"Quote Unquote"

"Sir Keir Starmer's defence of Israeli actions that appeared to be war crimes and an apparent unwillingness to stand up for Palestinian human rights have caused widespread disquiet."

Guardian Editorial, Feb 2024.



Photo: Luca Marino

Not only did Keir Starmer and David Lammy not speak up for Palestine, but at times they even endorsed Israel's murderous actions.

Both the local elections and the General Election (GE) showed that Palestine is a significant political issue for many voters. Not just the Muslim population, not just the hundreds of thousands demonstrating, but for the millions of young, old, progressive, trade union, and many other voters who would normally be expected to have voted Labour.

This impact has seen Labour spokespeople admitting the need to rebuild confidence with those alienated by the Party's stance on Palestine and the ceasefire. And during the GE campaign Keir Starmer even briefed the press on his willingness to recognise a Palestinian state at some indeterminate point in the future, a belated and inadequate fig leaf, and an insult to the tens of thousands of innocent people who've died.

The litmus test for Labour's ethical foreign policy

So what should supporters of Palestine now demand from the Labour Government?

Our impressive mass and long-standing movement for Palestine must demand a change of UK Government policy. The UK must become a public advocate of Palestinian freedom from Israeli oppression and occupation. And we must follow the lead of Spain, Ireland, Norway, and others

in immediately recognising a Palestinian state, in line with the overwhelming vote of the UN General Assembly.

Israel is now a rogue nation out of control, and recognition of Palestine must be coupled with action to bring it within the framework of international law. Words are not enough – as has been demonstrated by Israel's contemptuous response to the rulings of the ICJ and International Criminal Court (ICC), based on its continuing belief in its impunity.

Words are not enough

It is its military might that gives Israel its arrogance, but it is also its Achilles heel. The UK is not its largest arms dealer – the US has that tainted honour – but an arms embargo, leading to a total cessation of the two-way arms trade and military and intelligence co-operation with Israel, would be a

(cont. on next page)



Bitebacks

"What can we say to make it seem like Israel is not committing war crimes?"

Leaked internal request from the office of **Mark Rutte** to the Dutch Foreign Ministry, Dec 2023.

At the time of publication, Mark Rutte is the sole candidate for Secretary General of NATO.

(cont. from previous page)

seismic shift in Israel's global standing, coming as it would from the country largely responsible for the creation of the modern Israeli state.

UK funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has now been restored, but there are many others demands that can and should be made: withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, plus the reconstruction and independent development of Gaza are all just a start, with Palestinian self-determination the objective.

It is only actions such as the destruction of the Wall, the removal of settlements and settlers, the end of the military occupation and, critically, giving Palestinians back their land together with a return to the internationally-recognised borders of 1967 that a just peace and self-determination can be secured.

These huge steps would also represent a dramatic shift in both Labour and the UK's policy and practice.

The new Government is an opportunity we must not waste to get Labour to reset its ethical, moral, and political stance on Palestine. It is not an issue that will go away. If Labour fails this challenge, a whole generation of people – not just those on marches, in encampments, or organising local protests – are not going to go away or forget.

Hugh Lanning is a member of Dover and Deal CLP and Co-founder of Labour & Palestine. Follow Labour & Palestine at x.com/labourpalestine and www.facebook.com/labourandpalestine



"Quote Unquote"

"Our new government must do the right thing and stop enabling Israeli war crimes... Up until now, I have been challenging a Conservative government for its complicity in crimes against the Palestinian people. That complicity must end now that we have a Labour government."

Zarah Sultana MP, Guardian, Jul, 2024.

Scrap the two-child limit

Elaine Hoctor condemns this key driver of child poverty.

Child poverty matters

Four million children in the UK are living in poverty. That's nine in every class of thirty. Poverty means children arriving at school hungry, returning to a cold home, wearing clothes and shoes that don't fit, missing out on everyday childhood experiences such as trips and having friends round for tea. It damages children's education, health, and life chances.

Recent research by Loughborough University for the End Child Poverty Coalition found that in two thirds of UK parliamentary constituencies at least a quarter of children are now growing up in poverty, rising to 90% of constituencies in North East and North West England and Wales. The End Child Poverty Coalition, made up of eighty charities, faith groups, and unions, said there's a high variation in poverty levels. And comparing local poverty levels with the proportion of families affected by the two child cap, it found a strong correlation between the two. It's a key driver.

The cap makes a big difference

The two child limit is a key driver of this according to the Loughborough study. Introduced in 2017 by Tory Chancellor George Osborne (whose fifth child was born in February 2024), the two child limit affects families with a third or subsequent child born after 6th April 2017. It limits Universal Credit and Tax Credit payments to the first two children, so families can lose over £3,000 a year for each additional child – regardless of whether the family is in paid employment – and two thirds of families affected by the two child cap are already doing some paid work. Child Benefit payments are not affected, but Child Benefit is only £16.95 per week for second or subsequent children and has lost 20% of its value since 2010.

Research by the London School of Economics in 2023 also showed that the two child limit is highly unusual in international terms: in Europe only three countries place such a limit on support, and in each of these the limit is three or four children, not two.



A small price for our long-term future

Ending the two child limit would lift 300,000 children out of poverty and mean 800,000 children are less deep in poverty, at an estimated cost of £1.8bn. It is the most cost-effective way of reducing child poverty.

The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) is also calling for three further measures to lift one million children out of poverty:

- Scrap the benefit cap which limits the support a family can receive if they are not working or working only a small amount. This would reduce the depth of poverty experienced by 300,000 children and cost only £300m.
- Make free school meals available to all pupils. The CPAG analysis found that 900,000 children in poverty in England do not qualify for free school meals and estimates that rolling out universal free school meals would cost £2bn.
- Increase Child Benefit by £20 a week for all children. This would reduce child poverty and support the income security of low and middle income families who do not qualify for means tested benefits but still struggle financially. This would pull 600,000 children out of poverty and cost £12bn.

These are not large amounts for protecting the very future of our society.

Elaine Hoctor is a member of Leyton and Wanstead CLP and is a retired welfare rights advisor.



Bitebacks

"The obscene and inhumane two child cap must go, as must the five week wait."

Angela Rayner, Deputy Prime Minister, Twitter/X, Dec 2020.

Labour must recognise Maduro's democratic victory

Francisco Dominguez praises the successful programmes of recently re-elected President Maduro and condemns the continuing lies and violence of the US-backed opposition.

Another Chavismo victory

After an electoral campaign dominated by mass, enthusiastic mobilization of pro-Maduro forces throughout the country's territory, and a



messy crisis instigated by the extreme right-wing opposition with weak levels of support, Chavismo scored another impeccable election victory. The result speaks for itself: Nicolás Maduro was re-elected with 51.2%, against the US-supported candidate Edmundo González's 44.2%.

Continuing support for Maduro's economic and social programmes

Scrupulously monitored, this result makes total sense. Much has been achieved already, and President Maduro's programme for 2025-2031 promises continuing social progress - from wages to housing.

Month-on-month inflation was down to 1% in June 2024; oil output has increased to over 1m barrels a day; tax revenues in the first quarter of 2024 increased by 78% (US\$3.1 bn); the monthly minimum wage will be increased to US\$130, backdated from May 2024; and the economy is expected to grow by 5-8% in 2024.

The proportion of budget devoted to social expenditure has increased from 70% to 78%; food and basic necessities provided in the subsidised CLAP boxes (Local Committee for Production and Supply) now reach 7.6m families; and 5m new houses have been built, with 2m more planned over the next 6 years.

And in a drive to make women economically independent, 41,000 loans have been issued to female entrepreneurs, and over 220,000 women's committees have been established to

enhance women's role in the country's participatory democracy.

The hidden plan to dismantle the Chavismo advances

The US-supported opposition candidate Edmundo González was led by the nose by extreme right-wing politician Maria Corina Machado. His campaign strenuously tried to hide their real agenda and focused on the tired narrative of 'ousting the Bolivarian dictatorship'. They lied profusely about González's poll figures and used old photos of rallies in 2012, as they had done in 2019.

Nevertheless, after sustained efforts, the opposition plan was uncovered, in the form of Machado's 85-page plan 'Venezuela: Land of Grace' of October 2023. Only available in English, it aims to dismantle and reverse almost every aspect of post-Chávez Venezuela.

The dominant theme of the plan is the privatisation of just about everything under the sun in Venezuela: the oil and gas industries, education, pensions, and all state enterprises and public assets, using the finances raised to pay the country's external debt. Health care, currently free, would be replaced by an insurance-based system.

It would abolish existing labour laws (to maximise the 'flexibility' of the labour market); and abolish all financial payments from the private sector to protect workers (such as pension contributions, holidays, maternity leave, etc).



It would also dismantle the people's militia and adopt a 'hemispheric geopolitics' which would collaborate with - and mean subordination to - the Organisation of American States and the Southern Command. Or worse.

A history of opposition violence...

Machado and González have been central to many of the illegal and violent attempts to oust the democratically-elected government. From the short-lived coup d'état in 2002 against President Chávez to the failed coup d'état against President Maduro in 2019; the six-month-long waves of violence in 2014 and 2017; support for Juan Guaidó's unelected 'interim government'; and the illegal seizing of Venezuelan assets abroad (including 31 tons of gold in the Bank of England). They fervently called for and have supported the 930 brutal sanctions against their own country which have led to the unnecessary death of tens of thousands of innocent Venezuelans and the misery of millions.

Machado has repeatedly declared that "The government of president Maduro will only leave power when faced with the credible, imminent, and severe threat of the use of force." And the attitude of González in the run-up to the election is telling: in June, eight of the ten presidential candidates signed an agreement to respect the results of the elections, yet again overseen by independent international observers. But González refused to sign the document and clearly had no intention to recognise the election results, while the World's corporate media parrot their false allegations.

...Which broke out again after Maduro's victory

After the National Electoral Council (CNE) formally declared President Maduro the winner, masses of Chavistas celebrated at the presidential palace, and President Maduro announced his intention to enter into a period of dialogue with any opposition willing to participate. But as was to be expected,

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Maria Corina Machado immediately appeared on opposition TV announcing they did not recognise the results and alleging fraud.

On the next day, opposition thugs in several parts of Caracas and a few other cities, went on the rampage and attacked anything associated with the government. Using Molotov cocktails and other more lethal means, they tried to burn hospitals, crèches, offices of the PSUV (the United Socialist Party of Venezuela), ambulances, clinics, ministries, libraries, statues of indigenous people and of Hugo Chávez, and, of course, people: more than 3,600 local PSUV leaders were reported to



Photo: EFE

have been physically attacked, as were opposition leaders who'd accepted the authority of the CNE. 77 military and police officers were injured and one was killed. Over 1,000 of these thugs have been arrested. Nearly a thousand international observers witnessed these events in person.

External interference to drive another attempted coup

The election was dominated by a well-coordinated campaign from the World corporate media which bombarded millions of Venezuelans for months, which intensified in the days before the election, and was coupled by a bot-led campaign of hatred and fear. Worse, the CNE system was subjected to hundreds of sustained cyber hackings, with the intention to prevent the CNE from issuing the results. This was an externally-coordinated, multifaceted, destabilisation effort aimed at creating the conditions for a coup d'état. This was the plan all along.

The extreme right-wing claimed to have 70% of the local results in signed documents ('actas') by local election of-

ficers and demanded the government presents 100% of the 'actas'. President Maduro is ready to hand in 100% and has requested the Supreme Court to oblige the extreme right-wing to hand over their claimed '70%'. The US immediately sought to prevent such an outcome and publicly declared Gonzalez the winner. Clearly, the US has been the mastermind from the start.

Labour must support the elected government

The new Labour Government must demand the will of the people of Venezuela is respected. It must acknowledge the validity of Venezuela's election system, the authority of its CNE, and the fairness of this year's outcome. It must condemn opposition violence; and challenge the media lies about Venezuela. And we must return Venezuela's gold.

Dr Francisco Dominguez is an academic specialist on Latin America, and Secretary of the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign. Join the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign at www.venezuelasolidarity.co.uk.

Resist further changes to leadership elections

Simon Fletcher warns against giving the PLP a disproportionate say in future Leadership elections.

Even more power for the PLP?

The Labour Leadership continues its attack on the power of Party members, with the aim of insulating the Labour Government from accountability to the labour movement.



Before any notice to the Party membership, in June, the Guardian reported "strong rumours in party circles that the next conference... will be a moment of maximum strength to deliver some even more dramatic and controversial rule changes" and that a "key ambition of some is to give MPs the sole power to choose the next Labour Leader if the change takes place while the party is in government." In July, the Mail on Sunday reported the Leadership was planning to propose

new rule changes to "strip rank-and-file party members of their key role in picking the next Labour Leader in favour of more power for MPs", stating that this would involve reverting to an electoral college system.

At the time of writing we don't yet know what the Leadership intends, but threats to Party democracy must be taken seriously. Making the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) the sole arbiter in a Leadership election when Labour is in government would be a coup against the grassroots. But the electoral college should also be rejected.

Don't be fooled by an electoral college

An electoral college would hand a weighted vote to each Labour MP, worth thousands more votes than those of ordinary members and affiliated supporters.

When it was introduced at the beginning of the 1980s the electoral college was an historic advance, giving members a vote for the first time. It was resisted by those who believed it

gave the wider movement too much influence. But some on the right now see it is a potential protective barrier against the grassroots, by enhancing the position of MPs in the process.

The electoral college was reintroduced to stop Ken Livingstone from winning the London mayoral selection in 2000. The mechanism for that stitch-up was the golden vote of London Labour MPs, Assembly candidates, and MEPs.

Some will say returning to the electoral college would improve the rights of the affiliates. Don't be fooled. Currently the vote of a trade unionist is equal to an MP's. Under an electoral college MPs would cast votes many times larger than a member or a trade unionist.

Nothing should be done to tilt the balance away from democratic opinion in favour of a parliamentary elite – when it comes to electing a Leader, don't let the PLP outvote you.

Simon Fletcher is a member of Gateshead Central and Whickham CLP, and a political consultant and writer. Follow Simon at <https://modernleft.substack.com>

What Labour can learn from France

Richard Price warns of the dangers of a centrist agenda.

It's a different electoral system but...

On the face of things, French and British politics have little in common. British governments are elected by First Past the Post, which has entrenched a two-party system. France has a hybrid presidential and parliamentary government, and a two-round electoral system that obliges parties to build broader coalitions.

France had a mass Communist Party, with a claimed membership of 800,000 after the Second World War, while its British sister party's membership peaked at 56,000 in 1942. Rural France has played a much more important role than the shires have in British politics. Catholicism was a major force in French politics and a minor one in Britain. And yet there are important lessons to draw from the turbulent politics since the global financial crisis.

Centrist pro-austerity policies erode social democratic parties

Launching his presidential campaign in January 2012, François Hollande declared "My enemy is the world of finance". Elected on a left-of-centre manifesto that included raising taxes on big corporations, banks, and the wealthy, he then drifted to the soggy centre when in office. Within 18 months of winning the presidency, Hollande's approval rating was the worst in the history of the Fifth Republic.

Hollande was responsible for the appointment of right-winger Manuel Valls as prime minister, and was tainted by the highly controversial *loi travail* adopted by the Valls government that made it easier for employers to sack employees, and by persistently high unemployment.

So unpopular was Hollande that he announced his intention not to stand in 2017, precipitating a chaotic two-round Socialist Party (SP) presidential primary contest. Valls, the loser in the second round, refused to endorse the winner Benoît Hamon, and defected to the start-up party of Emmanuel Ma-

cron, a former minister in the SP Government. The upshot was a disastrous collapse in the SP vote, from 27.8% in the first round of the 2012 presidential election to a derisory 6.4% in 2017. In the parliamentary election that followed, the Socialists were reduced from 331 to 45 seats. Worse was to follow in the local elections of 2020, with the SP losing 9,700 local representatives.

Landslides can be fragile things

In 2017 Macron appeared to have the World at his feet. He got lucky in the presidential election campaign when the leading candidate François Fillon of the centre-right Republicans, became embroiled in a corruption scandal. Despite only polling 24% in the first round, Macron won the second round comfortably, by 66% to Marine Le Pen's 34%.

His newly-formed *La République En Marche* (LREM) party won a parliamentary super-majority a month later. Trading as 'neither right nor left' – a close approximation of Starmer's politics – it attracted figures from both the centre-right and centre-left. But within 18 months the government was rocked by the *gilets jaunes* protests.

Macron has never recovered his previous popularity, and within a few years his centre-left recruits had almost all departed. He won a 'loveless' victory in the 2022 presidential race by a substantially-reduced margin by

'not being Marine Le Pen'. In the parliamentary elections that followed, LREM's representation dropped from 350 seats to 245. Undeterred, Macron's Napoleonic self-belief encouraged him to wade into 'public sector reform' – a favourite theme of the Labour right – increasing the pension age, and provoking nation-wide protests. In this year's parliamentary elections the Macronites, now standing as part of Ensemble, were further reduced to 159 seats. With Macron unable to stand for a third term in 2027, his party could become just another small party of the centre.

Appeasing far right populism only encourages it

The last two decades have been punctuated by culture wars supposedly instigated in defence of France's secular state and predominantly directed against Muslim women. In April 2011, France became the first European state to ban the wearing of full-face veils in public. The so-called 'burqa ban' was followed by the 'burkini crisis' of Summer 2016. In October 2020, Macron gave a long sermon on secularism that included proposals to regulate imams and mosques. In June 2022, France's top administrative court ruled against permitting 'burkini' swimwear in public pools, and in September 2023, the same court upheld the government ban on wearing abayas in school and rejected complaints that it was discriminatory.

"Labour has also been trying to camp on Reform UK's front lawn"

The fact that all these invasions of Muslim women's private space were pushed by centrist politicians claiming the mantle of progressive secularism doesn't alter the fact that this is dog whistle politics, designed to outdo the racist far right.

Labour has also been trying to camp on Reform UK's front lawn by echoing its calls for small boats to be stopped, illegal immigration to be ended by securing Britain's borders, and for "returning migration levels back to normal" (whatever that is).



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Ignore the ethnic minority vote at your peril

Ethnic minorities account for 15% of the French population, of which two thirds are Muslim and the remainder are of sub-Saharan African and Caribbean heritage. Yet until recently, Muslims formed a tiny minority of the National Assembly. The result was widespread abstentions in elections. There are now 19 Muslim Assembly members, principally due to *La France insoumise* fielding a more diverse list of candidates. At the General Election, British Muslims showed that their votes cannot be taken for granted, with unprecedented rebellions in the North West, the Midlands, and London (see p9).

Membership declines are a serious health warning

In 2012, the French SP's membership stood at 173,000. By the end of the Hollande presidency it had fallen below 40,000, by 2021 it was down to 22,000, and has only undergone a modest revival to 45,000 since the SP joined electoral pacts with the other main left parties.

Since 2020, around 200,000 members have left the Labour Party in protest at the suppression of party democracy and its stance on Gaza. Labour must heed these warning signs.

Richard Price is Leyton and Wanstead CLP Political Education Officer and a member of the CLPD Executive.

"Quote Unquote"

"The Right has not gone away. Labour must address the rise of Populist Nationalism by putting fairness and equality at the heart of its programme for government."



Barry Gardiner MP, X.com, Jul 2024

A long way to Net Zero

Tim Harris explains how Labour's watered-down green pledges are not enough.

Massive cut-backs to the original plans

In 2021 Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves announced that a Labour government would herald a green industrial revolution, proclaiming that the Green Prosperity Plan would invest £28bn every year until 2030. While not enough to eliminate widespread fuel poverty and greenhouse gas emissions, it was certainly something to get excited about.

Details were scant, but investment programmes included factories to manufacture batteries in areas of high employment, research and development in technologies such as green hydrogen, expansion of renewables, roll-outs of mass transit public transport, and a programme to retrofit homes. Such a programme would:

- Dent carbon dioxide emissions (23% come from vehicles powered by fossil fuels and 17% from homes);
- Reduce the fuel poverty suffered by millions living in draughty houses;
- Create hundreds of thousands of jobs;
- Cut UK dependence on imported energy (we are Europe's second most gas-dependent country);
- Boost several sectors of the UK economy; and
- Generate huge tax revenues to fund public services.

But by Summer 2023 it was clear that this investment "might not be delivered immediately" and by February 2024, a massive reduction was announced: down to only £4.7bn a year, funded by a windfall tax on the oil and gas giants.

In response, John McTernan, former adviser to Tony Blair, told Newsnight that "It's probably the most stupid decision the Labour Party's made... What's the change Labour now offers?" And Sharon Graham, General Secretary of Unite, was equally scathing: "The retreat from Labour's £28bn green investment pledge will confirm workers' scepticism of the endless promises of jam tomorrow."

GBE is nowhere near enough

Labour's manifesto still pledged to turn Britain into a "green energy su-

perpower", including the creation of a publicly owned Great British Energy (GBE), which will "create 650,000 jobs across the country by 2030".

GBE is charged with co-investing with the private sector to develop nascent renewables such as hydrogen technology and floating offshore wind; scaling up wind and solar; and working with local authorities, co-ops, and energy companies to develop community energy, with profits channelled back into local communities to cut bills. All socialists – and anyone concerned about the environment – would welcome this, but how will this be achieved (especially the jobs target) when investment levels have been reduced so dramatically?

GBE is welcome, but is nowhere near enough. Its funding of £8.3bn over this parliament, less than £2bn a year, is a drop in the ocean. A recent report commissioned by NatWest and the Boston Consulting Group estimates that more than £900bn investment is needed to achieve net zero by 2050.

Eleanor Wolstencroft, from Labour for a Green New Deal, says the plan does not do enough "to challenge the energy companies that have done so much damage" but which will be left in control of the vast majority of the energy market. Wolstencroft also warns about Labour's jobs claim: "When the private sector is in charge, you're going to see job losses because they will find any way to keep their costs down and their profit up."

GBE must be a state-led and work-led enterprise to ensure it plays a role in a just transition to renewables.

Another missed opportunity

Labour has missed the opportunity to take bolder measures on energy, including nationalising the 'Big Six' retail energy suppliers (which the TUC says would cost about £3bn to buy back); taking the national grid into public ownership (the UK is almost the only country in Europe with a fully privatised grid); and imposing permanently higher taxes on BP's and Shell's profits (as is done in Norway). And without greater backing for GBE there is a real danger that it will be damp squib.

Tim Harris is a member of Leyton and Wanstead CLP.

Labour History

A unified Labour left can prevail

Barry Rodin recalls the lesson of 1980-81.

A progressive impact on Party rules

The events that unfolded during 1980 and early 1981 resulted in the biggest change in governance in any UK major political party for over



50 years, and showed how a determined and united left can have a progressive impact in the Labour Party.

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) had a major success in 1979 when Conference voted for the mandatory reselection of MPs. Unfortunately, it was later ruled out because of a 'drafting error!' CLPD, committed to a long-term and focused struggle, then rolled up its sleeves and redrafted the constitutional amendment. Sensing the time had come for radical change, CLPD also promoted rule changes on the election of Labour's Leader (to widen the voting franchise) and greater involvement by Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs) in the formulation of the election manifesto.

Co-ordinating a fragmented left

Partly due to a lack of direction in opposing the newly-elected Thatcher government, the Labour left had fragmented into an assortment of groups, such as the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, the Clause Four Group, and the Militant tendency.

To campaign effectively in the Party and trade unions, CLPD therefore encouraged the formation of an umbrella organisation co-ordinating these groups. The Rank-and-File Mobilising Committee proved to be an important vehicle in building support for constitutional change across the membership and labour movement.

Superior tactics and hard work

At the 1980 Annual Conference 'Mandatory Reselection' was at last success-

ful with no hitches this time, despite the opposition of the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU), which had the second largest union block vote at Conference. It had moved to the right and strongly opposed radical change.

Options tabled for the 'Election of a Labour Leader' ranged from an electoral college to one member one vote (OMOV). Supporters of this reform took the pragmatic and successful approach of moving initially just the general principle of widening the franchise, to include, in addition to MPs, individual members and affiliated trade unions.

Unfortunately, as Conference couldn't reach agreement on a specific voting procedure, a special conference had to be convened the following January. The problem was that there was no guarantee of majority support for any of the options submitted. This was partly due to certain 'moderate' trade unions arguing for MPs to have the lion's share of an electoral college vote. For example, the AEU specified 75%, which would effectively maintain the status quo.

However, CLPD made the inspired decision to support the motion put forward by the shopworkers union USDAW. It called for an electoral college giving the largest weight to the unions (40%) and 30% each to the CLPs and MPs. USDAW had a block vote of 429,000 votes, large enough to be pivotal in a close contest. If other unions and CLP delegates swung behind this motion there could be a majority for this radical reform.

After some debate the Rank-and-File Mobilising Committee agreed that the USDAW motion, although not perfect, had the best chance of a majority. An intense campaign then ensued, including phoning and lobbying union contacts and CLP delegates. The USDAW motion was successful, while the AEU was politically isolated and abstained from voting.

Superior tactics and hard work prevailed!

Uniting within the CLGA

Left unity, allied with a disciplined and focused strategy, can be a winning formula. Our immediate challenge is

to resist any further undermining of internal democracy and inclusiveness by a highly factional Labour right. And ultimately reverse it.

"CLPD and the CLGA remain the platforms by which the left can unite on a long-term programme and transform Labour"

The Centre Left Grassroots Alliance (CLGA) comprising of CLPD, Momentum, the Labour Representation Committee, Jewish Voice for Labour, and other progressive groups, has successfully co-ordinated support of left candidates in internal National Executive Committee (NEC), Conference Arrangement Committee (CAC), and National Constitutional Committee (NCC) elections since 1998 (see p24).

CLPD and the CLGA remain the platforms by which the left can unite on a long-term programme to energise grassroots activism, protect the trade union link, and transform Labour into a political movement with a progressive and electorally popular programme.

Barry Rodin is Orpington CLP Disability Officer and a member of the CLPD Executive.

"Quote Unquote"

"This is about kicking out the Tories after fourteen years of brutal austerity, and rejecting their prioritisation of the super-rich, and attacks on our trade unions, human rights, and civil liberties... But not only this: it is about building a grassroots movement for real change. For socialism."



Apsana Begum MP, acceptance speech, Jul 2024

Labour History

You're only finished when you quit

Christine Shawcroft remembers the Party under Blair.

Opposing Blair's wars

In 2002-04 I was National Secretary of Labour Against the War, campaigning against the US attack on Afghanistan and the threatened invasion of Iraq – a threat which soon turned into horrific reality. We had massive support amongst the party membership for our work and Blair's position began to look shaky. And then people started leaving the Party in disgust. We appealed to them to stay and fight the Blairites, but thousands left anyway. The result, of course, was to strengthen Blair's position in the Party and he comfortably won his foreign policy votes at Conference.



Leaving just strengthens the Leadership

So what did the leavers achieve? Did they stop the wars? Did they weaken Blair's position? Did they set up a new socialist party capable of winning elections? No, no, and no. So what was the point? People don't seem to understand that if you leave the Party in protest at the actions of a right wing Leader that is exactly what that Leader wants you to do! When did anyone ever win a fight by walking off the battlefield? Every member who leaves just strengthens the leadership and weakens the rest of us.

It's called a struggle for a reason

Leaders come and go. I've been a party member for 48 years. I've seen loads of terrible Leaders, and one brilliant one. But to quote Richard Nixon (sorry): "You're not finished when you're defeated. You're finished when you

quit." And as my mum always used to say: "If you can't fight the right wing of the Labour Party, how are you going to fight the Tories?"

If the class struggle was a stroll in the park, it wouldn't be called a struggle. Don't leave. And if you've left, come back. We fight on. We need everybody with us.

Christine Shawcroft is a member of Poplar and Limehouse CLP and the CLPD Executive.

"Quote Unquote"

"There is no final victory, as there is no final defeat. There is just the same battle. To be fought, over and over again. So toughen up, bloody toughen up."

Tony Benn

Stay and fight!

Mike Phipps lists 6 key reasons why resigning from the Labour Party should not be an option.

When your favourite MPs and councillors are barred from running for Labour and candidates with little local track record are imposed on you with no local consultation or support, it's very tempting to see the Party as no longer viable as a vehicle of change and to quit. This would be a mistake for several reasons:

1 The reason that Party democracy is being closed down is because the left remains a powerful force, still capable of winning policy with trade union support at Conference.

2 If everybody had taken the same approach in the New Labour years, when internal democ-

racy was also minimal and Labour in power embraced neoconservative ideas including illegal foreign wars, then we would never have elected Jeremy Corbyn as Leader.

3 Things will change now Labour is in government. John McDonnell MP says: "A Labour government [has] to face the real world. We have to prepare for that debate now and put forward the radical policies that will inevitably be needed to confront the climate and cost of living crises."

4 Leaving the Party is an individualist approach, almost a 'lifestyle choice'. It's not a collective strategy. The Labour Party is a terrain of struggle, just like the trade unions. Would you leave your union because of a lack of internal democracy or a right-wing leadership?

5 The alternatives are dire, from the far left fragments to the bigger parties dominated by charismatic but flawed individuals. Even a brilliant candidate with a strong track record like Jamie Driscoll failed to break through in the new North East mayoral seat.

6 Leaving is what the right of the Party want. Don't give it to them on a plate!

Mike Phipps is a member of Queens Park and Maida Vale CLP and the CLPD Executive.

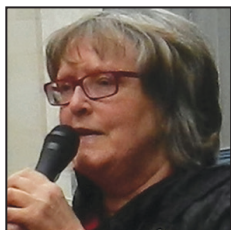


Women's Conference

For a democratic women's conference

Jean Crocker shares her experiences of defending Women's Conference as a democratic decision-making organisation in the Labour Party.

I've been on the Women's Conference Arrangements Committee (Women's CAC) for seven years, and am currently Vice-Chair. Things were far from clear at first



on the new Committee. At the meeting on motions in 2018, we came into a room with a huge pile of papers at each place, and we had to decide if they were in order at that one meeting. We asked for an electronic copy for the next year! I'm standing for re-election this year, but in the meantime I've set down some things I've learned which will be useful to CLP women in particular, and to future members of Women's CAC committed to a democratic Women's Conference.

Who are the elected members of Women's CAC?

- Three CLP members elected by Women's Conference CLP delegates;
- Three members put forward by unions;
- A representative from Labour Party Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC), who has so far always been a union representative, so the CLP representatives have been in a minority.

Union representatives can be good allies of CLP representatives; and the unions can be very generous, eg by offering to fund fringes and other networking events.

Who decides if motions are 'in order'?

The only democratic answer is: the elected representatives on Women's CAC. It's our role and duty. For that to happen, several things need to be in place:

- Time for elected members to read the motions. If we aren't allocated enough time, pressure is created to rely more on Party advice. All depends

on the pre-Conference 'democratic timetable'. By rule this is decided by the National Women's Committee (NWC) in consultation with Women's CAC. It didn't happen in 2023, though we did eventually get a weekend to read the motions after making strong representations. This year we weren't shown a plan until late July, with three days allocated to read the motions.

- Understanding what the rules do and do not exclude. For example, an argument was put for ruling against a motion because it was not well constructed. But there is no rule to say it must be well constructed! I've led on analysing the rules, and we had a helpful meeting with the Chair of the Labour Party CAC, which provided the useful clarification that there were no hidden rules unknown to us.

- Moving to a vote by the elected members, rather than continuing a discussion ad infinitum.

Can the Women's CAC decisions be overruled?

It's important that Women's CAC is independent, and answerable only to those who elected us. But in 2023, the National Executive Committee (NEC) overruled both the Women's CAC and the Labour Party CAC. In our case this was because information had been sent out that omitted the requirement for motions to be relevant to women. We made considerable efforts to get the correct information out, but it only reached CLPs right at the end of the process. So we found several motions to be in order that did not refer specifically to women, since the CLPs had kept to the rules as given. We were then told that we had been overruled by the NEC.

The Labour Party CAC reported that they were told that they won't be overruled again, and we hope the Women's CAC won't be overruled either. If it does, it's important to try to inform Conference what has happened.

Who decides which topics are debated at Conference?

Motions are put into topic groups by the Women's CAC, and these go into a 'priorities ballot' where the CLP delegates and the unions each decide an

equal number of topics. If they both choose the same topic, it hasn't yet been satisfactorily resolved as to who gets to add another preferred topic. The unions co-operate, quite rightly as solidarity is their strength, and topic groups which include union motions always get through the ballot. If CLP motions are grouped with union motions, they will get through too. But some of the groups which only include CLP motions fall by the wayside.

CLP representatives on the Women's CAC should therefore try to ensure that as many CLP motions as possible reach Women's Conference, while of course maintaining fair decisions. Ways to do this are:

- Push for implementation of the rule that the Women's CAC decides the number of motion debates; then press for a good number of debates, so that there is room for more motions. At the two-day Women's Conferences, we had eight motion debates. When we were cut to one day in 2023, there was pressure to have only four. But we held firm on six, which increased the number of grassroots CLP voices heard; and the same has happened in 2024. We are calling for a return to a two-day stand-alone Women's Conference in 2025.

- When putting motions into topic groups, try to avoid having too many small groups with only a few motions in each (as far as makes sense, given the actual motions that come in). For example, I would advocate for a larger group on Women's Health rather than several small groups on different aspects of women's health, other things being equal. This is because only six groups will be successful in the priorities ballot, and if they are all small groups competing with each other, fewer CLP motions will reach Women's Conference.

Who decides what goes into a 'composite motion'?

The only democratic answer is: the delegates of the CLPs and affiliates (unions and socialist societies) who have put forward motions on the topic. There is a compositing meeting for them to merge the motions into one

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composite motion (sometimes two).

There is usually a front-bench MP there to advise, and sometimes they have strong views. A member of Women's CAC is the Chair, there is a Policy Officer, and there may be others present. But the wording of the motions is not in our hands, but in the delegates' hands.

To ensure that this happens:

- The Chair should make it clear that, though there may be advice, the wording is up to the delegates. I repeat this during the meeting if it seems needed. For me, the Chair's role is to ensure that those who want to speak get a chance to do so, while not taking part at all in the debate herself.

- The Delegates' Guide must also make it clear that delegates make the decision (and the wording was made more explicit in 2023).

Increased constraints on motions

Unions send one motion each to Annual Women's Conference, and they are always in order. The vast majority of motions, and all those found out of order, are from CLPs. Busy CLP volunteers mostly do not have access to professional advice, so increased constraints on motions work against them.

At the 2023 Conference there was a return to greater restrictions on motions in an amendment which said "...CLPs may submit one motion to

Conference which is not substantially addressed by reports of the NEC or NPF [National Policy Forum] to Conference", so requiring a detailed reading of two documents before writing a motion. The same has been applied to Women's Conference, although it isn't a rule change agreed by Women's Conference.

Emails modifying the requirements for 2024 were sent out on the 17th and 26th July this year. They gave conflicting information, but in summary, for Women's Conference 2024, a motion must comply with the following:

- On an issue that relates to Women;
- On one subject;
- No more than 250 words in length;
- Not on an organisational matter;
- On an issue that has arisen after Friday 5th July 2024.

The last rule was probably intended as a helpful simplification, but it appeared too late to give Women's branches and CLPs reasonable time, especially in the holiday period, to organise quorate meetings before the deadline of 12 noon on 21st August.

The Women's CAC report

This should be an important part of accountability, but the point at which Women's CAC members see it has varied from year to year. In 2023 most members of the committee didn't see it at all until the morning of Women's Conference itself. A request has been made for 2024 that the Women's CAC

members see a draft much earlier, and this has been heard.

A policy-making Conference

Motions passed at Labour Conference should become policy. Motions sent there from Women's Conference and passed should also carry that weight. Even though this is not how things are now, Women's Conference gives opportunities for women to express views, change minds, and hopefully influence Party policy. All motions passed at Annual Women's Conference are the policy of our Conference, and as such should enter the agenda of the National Women's Committee.

Jean Crocker is a member of Gateshead Central and Whickham CLP and the CLPD Executive. She is also Vice-Chair Women's CAC, writing in a personal capacity, and is happy to answer queries: please email her at clpdwomen@gmail.com

Women's Conference 2024

Women's CAC Elections

Please vote for the following Centre Left Grassroots Alliance candidates:

- Zoe Allan, Brecon, Radnor and Cwm Tawe CLP;
- Jean Crocker, Gateshead Central and Whickham CLP;
- Rathi Guhadasan, Brent East CLP.

We must still address the Forde Report

Rachel Garnham explains how the lessons of the Forde Report aren't going away.

Nothing has been learnt

Four years on from the leaked report revealing the horrendous behaviour of the Labour bureaucracy in the early years of Jeremy Corbyn's Leadership, and despite the Forde report two years ago proposing a series of recommendations to address the systemic



issues of racism, misogyny, and the monoculture of Labour's workplace, the Labour Leadership's behaviour in the run-up to this year's General Election (GE) showed that zero lessons have been learned and the factionalism, rule-breaking, and institutional racism is worse than ever.

Despite claims by Labour that many of Forde's recommendations have been implemented, all the evidence suggests that fundamental issues remain.

And Martin Forde has made no secret of his dissatisfaction with the Leadership's response to his report. On 19th June 2024, The Independent reported Labour had attempted to

'gag' Forde with a letter claiming he was acting against the Party's interest. He noted:

"I'm a private individual; they can't silence me. I fundamentally object to people saying to me, 'You don't know how to behave as a professional'. I'm afraid that Black professionals get it all the time."

Continuing discrimination

The Forde report highlighted the completely dysfunctional complaints process inherited by Corbyn's leadership, the lack of engagement with Jewish Voice for Labour and issues with the

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antisemitism training introduced, lack of transparency in recruitment, and serious problems of discrimination, with evidence of unacceptable incidents of racism, sexism, antisemitism and Islamophobia.

The ongoing suspension and disenfranchisement of CLPs in areas with large Muslim populations such as Luton, Peterborough, and Newham is not going to help address Labour's loss of voters from Black and Asian communities seen at the GE. An Ipsos 'mega-poll' for The Independent showed Labour's support among ethnic minority voters has fallen by 18 percentage points to 46%, compared to 2019.

Further evidence that Forde has been ignored comes in the failure to implement the Rule Book with respect to new democratic structures for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic members and Disabled members. No

conferences and no committees are in sight, despite their presence in the Rule Book.

Furthermore, head office has chipped away at Labour's women's organisation, seemingly pretending the elected National Women's Committee and Women's Conference Arrangements Committee do not exist, ignoring policy passed, and squeezing any democratic functioning into as few minutes as they can get away with.

We still have work to do

The horrendous treatment of Diane Abbott, Faiza Shaheen, and Lloyd Russell Moyle, alongside the denial of members' rights to select the candidates of their choice in CLPs across Britain, demonstrate there is much work to do to fulfil Labour's claim to



be a democratic socialist party. However, Diane's success against the odds in remaining as a Labour MP, against the will of Starmer and his coterie, demonstrates the power of campaigning and that victories for the left are possible.

Labour is much more likely to be successful in government if we live our values, implement the Rule Book, and recognise that (as the Rule Book says) by the strength of our common endeavour we achieve more than we achieve alone. This means listening to members, reinstating abandoned elements of Party democracy, such as democratic selections and the equality structures, and genuinely paying attention to the wise advice of Martin Forde.

Rachel Garnham is a member of Mid Bedfordshire CLP and is Co-Chair of CLPD.

Wales needs real change

Jackie Owen warns how Starmerist interventions risk Labour's chances in the next Senedd elections.

Short-lived celebrations

Not a Tory MP in Wales, the first time since 2005, a fantastic result for Welsh Labour Party members to rightly celebrate. But celebrations have



been short-lived as attention was drawn again to the Senedd and the protracted, but inevitable, resignation of Vaughan Gething as Senedd First Minister and Welsh Labour Leader.

Gething may not have done anything illegal or against the rules, but his acceptance of a £200,000 donation to his leadership campaign from a millionaire owner of a waste disposal company with a criminal conviction for illegal dumping was very poor judgement. His sacking of Hannah Blythyn without following due process was unforgivable and sealed his fate.

Add to this the last-minute parachuting in of Starmer loyalists with no links to South Wales into safe Labour seats in Cardiff and Swansea, and appalled members became disengaged

and significantly reduced the number of campaigners on the doorstep, while our voters were telling us that we were no different to the Tories. Welsh Labour's share of the vote fell by 3.9% in the General Election (GE).

The 'coronation' of Eluned Morgan as a compromise leader to unite a divided Labour Group may be a successful strategy but it has completely disenfranchised rank-and-file members from the process and doesn't guarantee electoral success in the expanded Senedd elections in May 2026.

We need clear red water

What has been shown time and time again in Wales is that Welsh Labour is at its best when there is clear red water between both Welsh Labour and UK Labour and between the Welsh Government and the UK Government. Much has been made of the new opportunity of the Senedd and Westminster working in partnership, but it is vital that the Senedd and our members continue to hold UK Labour's feet to the flames.

If UK Labour is to facilitate real change in Wales, then as a minimum it needs to deliver the following:

- Reinstatement of fair funding for Wales. Not only is the Barnett Formula unfit for purpose, but the funding with-

held by the Tories for the last five years must be reinstated;

- Devolution of the management of the Crown Estate and its assets;
- Devolution of Criminal Justice.

The New Welsh Labour leadership must also resist the pressure from the right to dump the radical commitments made in Welsh Labour's 2021 Senedd manifesto, 'Moving Wales Forward'. The progress of the first 12 months has stalled (eg a living wage for care workers, the creation of a National Forest) and without the radical reform of social care, improved and integrated mental health services, and other clear socialist policies, we are in danger of losing ground to the left in Wales and of consequently ceding power and influence to Reform.

At all levels of our party, we need representatives who recognise how Welsh Labour can fully regain the trust of the people of Wales. But first we must regain the trust and engagement of our members.

Jackie Owen is a member of Wrexham CLP, Welsh Labour's Executive Committee (WEC) member for North Wales CLPs, and Vice Chair Welsh Labour Grassroots (WLG). Follow WLG at welshlabourgrassroots.org.uk, facebook.com/WelshLabourGrassroots, and x.com/wlgrassroots.

Grangemouth needs a 'just transition'

Jim Mackechnie highlights how the green economy must prioritise employment opportunities which deliver workers' needs.

The loss of Scotland's only refinery

In the 1970s SNP posters covered the land declaring 'It's Scotland's Oil'. It turned out it wasn't Scotland's, nor the UK's: it was purloined by the multi-nationals. And now one of them proposes to close its refining operations at the massive Grangemouth complex, Scotland's only oil refinery, representing 8% of Scotland's manufacturing base, and threatening 500 highly-skilled jobs.



Grangemouth is owned by Petroineos Manufacturing Scotland Ltd, which posted pre-tax profits of £107.4m last year. Behind that company is the multi-national Ineos Group, which posted gross profits for 2023 at £1.2bn, and its partner Petrochina, which reported a net profit of

£19bn in 2023. So there is plenty of cash around to keep the workforce in their jobs.

Where's the 'transition'?

Unite the Union has quite properly been fighting to secure its members' jobs, and this could be an opportunity for a quick win for the much vaunted 'Just Transition' strategy to a net zero economy. However, as Unite has incisively pointed out, the strategy is little more than fiction: there is no meaningful transition plan to ensure future employment opportunities, and certainly not a worker-led one. As Derek Thomson, Unite's Scottish Secretary said: "There's no green jobs revolution. It's a myth." And the Scottish TUC has warned "There is no credible plan on the table despite years of talk."

In the last eight years jobs in low carbon and renewables have only increased by 2,500 in Scotland, while the fossil fuel sector has shed 43,800 jobs. In the 'green' offshore and onshore wind sectors there was actually a reduction in jobs. Meanwhile the jobs of 93,000 oil and gas workers north of the border are on the line as we de-carbonise the economy.

We need a robust strategy

As energy is a reserved matter, the new Westminster government needs to act. Energy Secretary Ed Miliband's promise that "The UK government will leave no stone unturned in seeking a future for the Grangemouth site and its workers" has yet to bear fruit, and Labour needs a robust strategy on the wider picture.

Public ownership and government direction is essential if 'Just Transition' is to become a reality with workers' needs at its very heart. As a minimum, it should include mandatory sectoral collective bargaining and an enforceable jobs guarantee to ensure every oil and gas worker can find equivalently-paid alternative employment or fully-funded retraining without having to move away from communities, friends, or families. As Unite General Secretary Sharon Graham says "We cannot allow oil and gas workers to become the coal miners of our generation."

Jim Mackechnie is Glasgow Kelvin CLP Trade Union Liaison Officer and a member of the CLPD Executive.

CLPD Guidance

Future Conference Motions

The rules have changed. To be accepted by the Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC), motions must meet the following requirements:

- On one subject.
- No more than 250 words in length.
- Not considered by the CAC as an organisational matter or a constitutional amendment.
- It deals with a topic which arose after the publication of the reports of the National Policy Forum (NPF), Policy Commissions, and National Executive Committee (NEC), and has not been substantively addressed in those reports.

■ The issue could not otherwise have been raised through the NPF process.

■ It does not seek to by-pass either the NPF policy-making or NEC decision-making processes, or to overturn or revisit the Party Policy Programme as agreed through the NPF process, including issues defeated at the NPF which failed to achieve the status of an alternative position at the NPF.

All motions that are accepted by the CAC are then divided into subject areas and submitted to the Priorities Ballot at the start of Conference.

More information can be found in the CLPD-Momentum guide to Conference. Visit www.clpd.org.uk.

Conference 2024

Stand with Latin America's left

Free public event, open to all. Wine and refreshments provided.

18:30-20.00, Mon 23rd September

The Racquet Club Hotel & Ziba Restaurant, 5 Chapel Street, Liverpool L3 9AG

Join guests from Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Bolivia, and across Latin America in solidarity – where the left is proving a better world is possible!

Presented by Arise – A Festival of Left Ideas, Labour Friends of Progressive Latin America, Friends of Bolivia, Friends of Ecuador, Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Action Group, Venezuela Solidarity Campaign, and the Brazil Solidarity Initiative.

¡Viva la Solidaridad!

More power for Party members

Barry Rodin calls for party members to have more say in selecting MPs and Leaders.

A healthy Party needs more accountability

The vast majority of our current MPs are political careerists adhering to a centrist, status quo ideology, in line with the current Leadership. And the Leader's power of patronage holds considerable sway with these MPs.



The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) has long campaigned for grassroots democracy in the Party as a prerequisite for implementing progressive and transformative policies in government. This involves increasing the accountability of the Leadership and MPs to Party members, especially regarding the implementation of our agreed political programmes now a Labour Government is in power.

Progressive change only happens when grassroots pressure makes politicians respond.

Restore the 10% threshold for Leadership nominations

In a healthy democratic Party, the Leader should be accountable not only to MPs but also to its members and affiliated organisations. Under current rules, changed for the worse at Conference in 2021, MPs have a disproportionate influence on the election of Leader, making it much harder for MPs on the left to achieve the qualifying threshold of MPs.

Candidates for Leader and Deputy Leader must now be nominated by at least 20% of the PLP and either at least 5% of CLPs or at least three affiliated organisations (at least two of which are trade unions) comprising 5% of affiliated membership. This must change, and CLPD continues to wage a long-term campaign to restore the nominating threshold to no more than 10% of Labour Party MPs, as was the case in 2021.

Local candidates are crucial for marginal seats. There are many positives in selecting candidates who understand the local area, its social and environmental challenges, and local aspirations and needs, and who re-

fect the diversity in society (as called for in the Rule Book). And local CLP members are more willing to put more hours into campaigning. All of which may be crucial for winning marginal seats in today's unstable electoral landscape (see p9).

However, recent factional and undemocratic actions in the selection of candidates have seen numerous examples of hard-working local candidates being excluded, often for trivial or spurious reasons, and replaced by supporters of the current Leadership 'parachuted' in despite little knowledge of the local areas and communities. We now have fewer members of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) with a range of employment backgrounds and more highly factional careerists. And with that an even smaller range within the PLP when we choose our next Leader.

This is why CLPD continues to campaign for increasing members' rights, open and democratic processes, and the rule changes through which to achieve them.

Barry Rodin is Orpington CLP Disability Officer and a member of the CLPD Executive.

Book review

Follow the Money

Dave Beadle reviews Paul Johnson's analysis of public sector finances.

An easy read about the nuts and bolts

Don't be put off by cover testimonials from Laura Kuenssberg and the Murdoch press, *Follow the Money: How much does Britain cost?* is an easy-to-read outline of public sector taxes and spending by Paul Johnson, Director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies and respected academic. He avoids technical jargon and delivers his analyses in an objective, understandable, and friendly style.

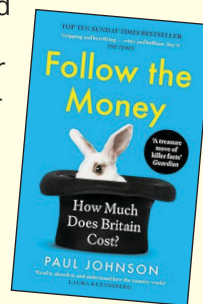
Paul takes us through the 'big taxes' as well as the not-insignificant revenues from others to raise £1.2tn each year. He then examines our current and future spending commitments – on pensions and benefits, health and social care, ed-

ucation, and local and devolved government.

His aim is to improve our understanding about the choices ahead of us: over the size and scope of the state, taxation and spending, and our priorities. For Paul, how we structure those taxes and deliver that spending are equally important.

Must do better

Nor does Paul pull his punches about the anomalies and unsustainable legacies created out of political expediency by both Tory and Labour governments, or the loopholes exploited by the rich. And we can also infer his views on the inequitable distribution of income and wealth in the UK, and how it's got worse. His rallying call is that "We should be able to do better – to



raise taxes in a way which is fairer on the one hand and causes less economic damage on the other."

I'd have liked to see more about wealth and/or property taxes, windfall taxes, the avoidance of inheritance tax, actions on trusts and offshore tax havens, and much more. Indeed, he once said to me "If

you can find a wealth tax that works, let me know."

But these are not the subject of this book, which provides the basics of where we are and what has to be delivered, and is the starting point for later discussions about policies and the economy.

Dave Beadle is a member of Southgate and Wood Green CLP and the CLPD Executive.

Tel's Tales

Tel's Tales appears monthly at:
www.clpd.org.uk

Message to Rachel Reeves – where the money could come from

- Taxing capital gains at the same rate as income would net the Treasury £12bn a year.
- Restricting tax relief on pensions to the basic rate of income tax would raise £14.5bn.
- Removing the losses the Bank of England makes on its gilt holdings, from the way the government's debt rule is calculated would raise an estimated £20bn.
- The wealth of billionaires in the UK has increased by 1,000% since 1990. The richest 1% possess more wealth than the poorest 70%. A wealth tax is essential.

Stop former Prime Ministers cashing in

"The antics of former PMs have helped send trust in politics to all-time lows. We've seen Tony Blair shilling for autocracies, David Cameron lobbying for Chinese interests and for the collapsed financial firm Greensill Capital, Boris Johnson meeting Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro on behalf of a hedge fund manager, and Liz Truss giving embarrassing but well-paid speeches to right-wing American audiences.

"The sight of the country's politicians renting themselves out to dubious clients is the most vivid possible symbol of ruling class corruption... But Gordon Brown appears not to have enriched himself at all. His fees for advising the international fund-management firm Pimco and a Swiss private equity firm were reportedly paid to the Office of Gordon and Sarah Brown, the organisation that supports the couple's charitable work."

Simon Kuper, *the Guardian*.

The attainment gap facing low-income families is growing wider

Research by the Education Policy Institute shows the attainment gap widens

at every stage of schooling – at age 5, age 11, and age 16. Disadvantaged pupils are now more than 19 months behind their peers by the time they sit their GCSEs.

Amazon's anti-union ideology

"The number one thing to realise when dealing with Amazon, which is actually not like most companies, is that all these [labour] decisions – whether it's in Coventry, India, Germany, or Bessemer, Alabama – are done in Seattle, at the highest levels... It really is part of an overall ideology on 'how we are going to deal with labour'. The company sees itself as a 'disrupter' – including in relation to employment law. It's not just a traditional anti-unionism. It's kind of like entering a labour market and saying: 'Why are there these regulations? Why does this exist? We're going to do something new.'"

Mathias Bolton, head of commerce at the UNI Global Union, which campaigns for better terms and conditions at Amazon worldwide, the Observer.

What it would mean if Trump were to win

"'Elections have consequences', Barack Obama informed Republicans in 2013. True then, true now, this time with consequences both for the nation and for a Republican Party that shed its traditional centre-right position for populism on steroids.

"Down is the internationalism of Eisenhower, the Bushes and Reagan. Up is isolationism. Down is the free-market economist Milton Friedman, up is industrial policy. Down is free trade, up is protectionism. Down are open borders, up are deportations. Down is globalism, up is America First. Down is the policymaking power of Hollywood campaign cash, up are Silicon Valley innovators, including Elon Musk who will contribute \$45m a month to the Trump campaign. Down is the green revolution, up is 'drill baby, drill.'"

Irwin Stelzer, based in the US, who writes a weekly column for the Business Section of the Sunday Times.



Labour Hub

Labour Hub is an online platform showcasing pluralist debate on the Labour left. It focuses on the development of Labour policy from a left perspective, but also covers the internal life of the Party and other issues of interest to socialists, such as international events and cultural matters.

We work closely with the Labour Left Podcast, where host Bryn Griffiths interviews different left figures each month, and we're always keen to include new writers.

Get in touch at www.labourhub.org.uk

Celebrating Over 50 Years

CLPD Campaigns For:

- A real policy-making Annual Conference;
- An effective and accountable NEC;
- The defence of the Trade Union link;
- More progressive Labour candidates for elected office who are women, BAME, or disabled people; and, generally, for an increase in candidates with a working class background, to counteract the unacceptable current under-representation;
- A local electoral college for choosing leaders of council Labour Groups;
- An internal Party ombudsperson;
- A clear jobs and growth policy in sharp opposition to the Tories and austerity.



Bitebacks

"Ms Reeves is expected to reveal a £20bn 'black hole' she has found in the books."
Sky News, Jul 2024

"Yes of course they knew... how bad things were."

Paul Johnson, Director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, Sky News, Jul 2024 (see p22)

Celebrating Over 50 Years of CLPD

About CLPD and our fight for Party democracy

Defending the sovereignty of Conference

CLPD was formed in 1973 by a group of rank-and-file activists with support from about ten Labour MPs. The main motivation for the Campaign was the record of the Labour governments in the sixties and the way that Annual Conference decisions were continually ignored on key domestic and international issues. The immediate cause was Harold Wilson's imperious and undemocratic rejection in 1973 of any decision by Annual Conference to adopt an alternative economic policy involving the possible public ownership of some 25 strategic companies.

Holding the PLP and the Leadership to account

CLPD's first demand was, therefore, for mandatory reselection of MPs so they would be under pressure to carry out Conference policies and be accountable to Party members. This demand was achieved in 1979/80 through the overwhelming support of CLPs and several major unions,

especially those unions where the demand for reselection was won at their own annual conferences (see p16).

CLPD also sought to make the Leader accountable through election by an electoral college involving MPs, CLPs and TUs. Previously Labour Leaders were elected by MPs alone. This demand was achieved in January 1981 and was an advance for Party democracy, although some MPs saw it as a reason to defect and form the SDP, eventually to get fewer votes than Lord Sutch's Party.

Promoting Party democracy

CLPD additionally promoted a range of reforms to give Labour women (see pp18-19) and black and minority ethnic members greater representation within the Party. The main demand for a woman on every parliamentary shortlist was achieved over the period 1986-88, soon followed by All-Women Shortlists.

CLPD will sometimes promote seemingly broader, non-democracy issues such as the significant extension



of public ownership, defending the welfare state, and the First Past The Post electoral system (PR would mean no majority Labour Governments). All such policies derive from our commitment to socialist values and socialist advancement.

The major focus of CLPD's work in recent years has been to win back power for ordinary rank-and-file Party members, which has been surreptitiously transferred to the centre under the pretext of 'modernisation' and, ironically, 'extending Party democracy'. For example, CLPD campaigned for and achieved OMOV for the CLP section of the National Policy Forum. CLPD continues to campaign for a real policy-making Conference and an effective and accountable NEC.

To find out more about CLPD, visit our website at www.clpd.org.uk. We can usually provide speakers for meetings, especially if requests are made well in advance.

Conference 2024

CLPD Conference fringe meetings

Briefings and updates for delegates and attendees on composites, ballots, and rule changes – and much more. All are at the Friends Meeting House, 22 School Lane, Liverpool L1 3BT.

Eve of Women's Conference:
5-6pm, Friday 20th Sep.

Party Democracy – The Key to Labour's Success in Government
6.30pm, Saturday 21st Sep.
Speakers include Richard Burgon MP, Carol Mochan MSP, Mish Rahman (NEC), Jess Barnard (NEC).

Review of Conference:
6.30pm, Tuesday, 24th Sep.
Speakers include Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP, Jess Barnard, Mish Rahman.

All welcome. Not to be missed!

The CLGA

The Centre Left Grassroots Alliance (CLGA) has been in operation for 25 years and is an alliance of Labour Party organisations which co-ordinate their activity in relation to Labour's internal party elections, to ensure that the party's membership is genuinely represented on Labour's national bodies.

In particular, it puts forward slates of progressive candidates for elections to the National Executive Committee (NEC), the National Policy Forum (NPF), Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC), the National Constitutional Committee (NCC), the Women's CAC, and the National Women's Committee. Central to the CLGA's approach is the pursuit of maximum unity in these elections, which has consistently proved to be successful.

The CLGA members include the CLPD, Momentum, Campaign for Socialism, Grassroots Black Left, Labour Black Socialists, Jewish Voice for Labour, Kashmiris for Labour, Labour

Assembly Against Austerity, Labour Briefing (Co-op), Labour CND, Labour Representation Committee, Labour Women Leading, Red Labour, and Welsh Labour Grassroots.

For the Labour Government to deliver the change we promised, it's vital that the party's national committees genuinely reflect the membership's views and priorities. The CLGA remains the key platform by which we can achieve this.

Conference 2024

More articles online

Campaign Briefing and many other articles are available on the CLPD website at www.clpd.org.uk – including the model motions and rule changes CLPD encouraged CLPs to submit to Conference 2024.