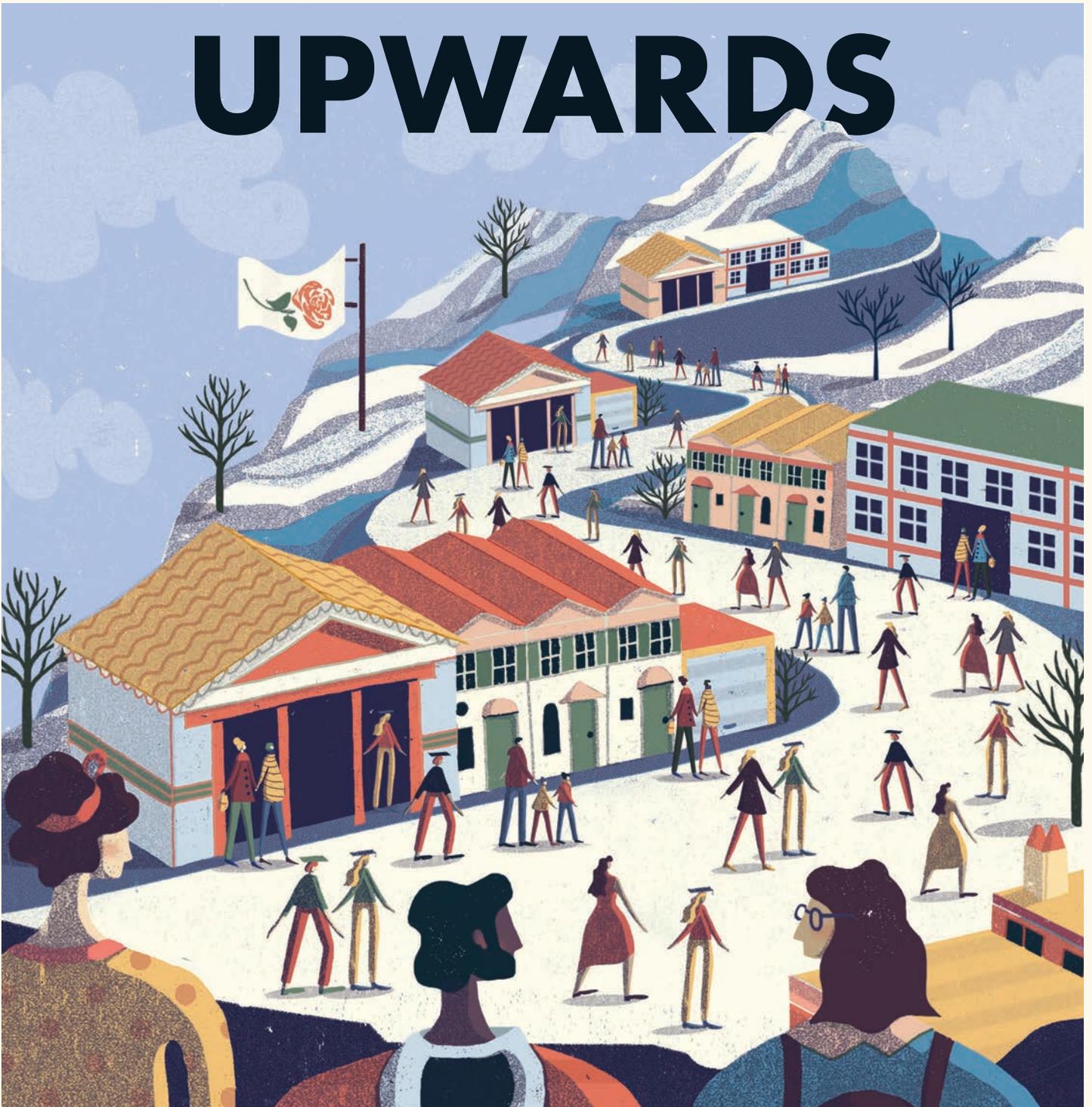


FABIAN REVIEW

The quarterly magazine of the Fabian Society

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info@fabians.org.uk

FABIAN SOCIETY

61 Petty France
London SW1H 9EU
020 7227 4900 (main)
020 7976 7153 (fax)
info@fabians.org.uk
www.fabians.org.uk

General secretary,
Andrew Harrop

Events and Partnerships
Director of partnerships
and events, Alex Sanderson
Events and stakeholder
assistant, Robin Harvey

Editorial

Editorial director, Kate Murray
Head of media and
communications, Claire Sewell

Research

Deputy general secretary,
Olivia Bailey
Head of the Changing Work
Centre and senior research
fellow, Cameron Tait
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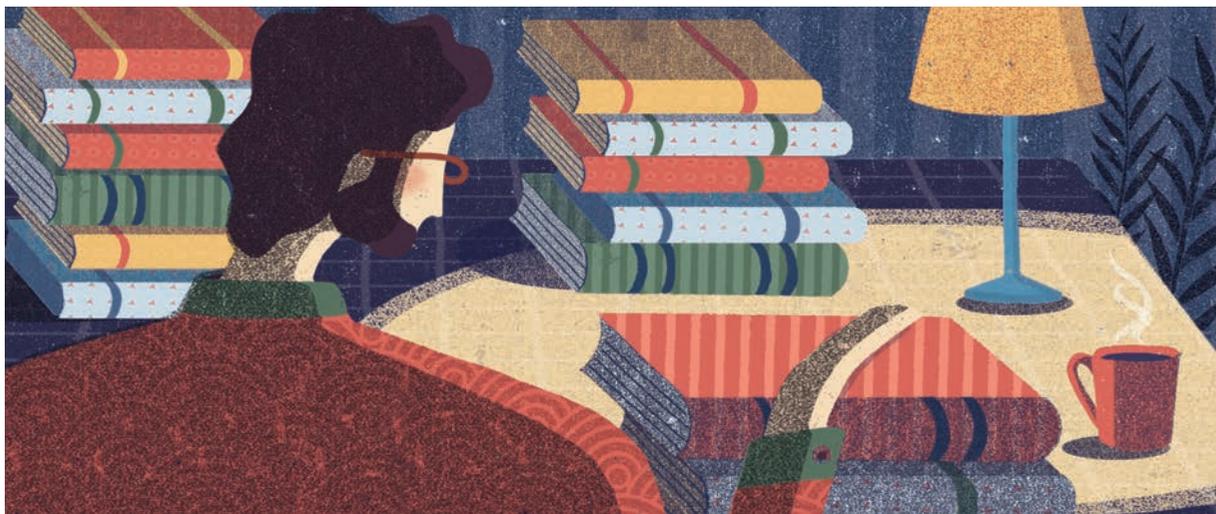
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More homework

Before the next election, Labour needs to think harder about policy, writes *Andrew Harrop*

LABOUR HAS THE most leftwing leader in its history. So how, in this election, did the party present a policy programme that would increase child poverty? It is a troubling question and it casts a long shadow over Labour's hugely successful campaign: a campaign that in other regards stood out for its conviction and moral clarity.

The disconcerting truth is that Labour's manifesto policies would have raised living standards for the top half and cut them for the bottom. On the one hand, the party failed to promise to end huge benefit cuts that will drive a million people into poverty. The share of national income spent on benefits would have plummeted, abandoning Gordon Brown's belief in sharing the proceeds of growth through redistribution.

On the other hand – although Labour pledged tax rises for the top 2 per cent of adults – the party's plans for public services would have left higher income households better off on average. The manifesto offered 'something for nothing' to the top half – with new universal entitlements to childcare, school meals, university, lifelong learning and social care – but did not ask the vast majority to pay any more in tax or social insurance to fund them.

Fabians have long supported universalism in the welfare state, and the inspiring promise of a lifelong National Education Service is something that everyone on the left can get behind. But in setting out its plans Labour ditched the cherished Beveridgean ideal, that universal entitlements should be used by us all and paid for by us all. The new frontiers of the welfare state were to be funded by 'other people': not just the super-rich but the victims of the welfare cuts too.

So how was it that the Labour party stood on a programme that would have widened the gap between rich and poor? Or, to put it another way, why did Jeremy Corbyn's manifesto end up being more statist, but less redistributive than New Labour was in office?

Electoral politics might be part of the answer. Promising to raise benefits or asking people to pay for new public services is not a huge vote-winner. Then again,

the Liberal Democrats said they would do both. And Labour's manifesto did not just say things to be popular: that's why it was a refreshing change. These electoral considerations can't have been the only reason.

Could the answer lie closer to home, in the Labour party's internal workings? It seems that, at the heart of the party, no one made the case for higher social security. Labour's vocal membership was not campaigning for it and the unions prioritised their members' jobs and pay. Their lengthy wish-lists dominated the manifesto but they did not fight for better benefits, and so failed low income Britain.

Next time, the expertise and talent of the whole of the party must be drawn upon. Much of it is on the backbenches and MPs should be asked by the leadership to sit on commissions to develop new ideas. It is time for Labour to rediscover a professional, empirical approach to policy. For example, not enough people knew that a high minimum wage is no substitute for tax credits in tackling child poverty. Labour needs fewer easy slogans and more nerdy homework.

And policies need to be considered in the round, not as discreet propositions. It was only by looking at the whole package of tax and spending plans that their inequalitarian impact became clear. Similarly, each individual idea for extending state activism sounded reasonable enough. But the nationalisation proposals as a package felt like distant, 1970s statism, rather than a democratising of the economy to put more control into people's own hands.

Labour exists to spread power, wealth and opportunity not to expand the state for its own sake, a lesson learnt long ago by Fabians. And in that context, the fight against poverty should have been at the front of the policy queue. The Labour party used to know that egalitarianism trumps state socialism; that collectivism must be based on contribution; and that evidence and practicality beat hopeful dreams. Next time Labour writes a manifesto, it needs to think harder. **F**

Shortcuts



THE RISE OF YOUTH

Does age now trump class in British politics?

—Kate Alexander Shaw

Labour's surprise success in June's election, gaining 32 seats and winning 40 per cent of the popular vote, has quickly been absorbed within a new narrative about the rise of youth. Before the election, the conventional wisdom was that there was little point in courting young adults who could not be relied on to actually vote. After the poll, a wrongfooted media swiftly pivoted to proclaim a victory for young voters, and a vindication for Jeremy Corbyn's strategy of targeting them. Early rumours of youth turnout above 70 per cent proved apocryphal, but the dominant story stuck: it was youth that had (nearly) carried the day.

Entirely true it may not be, but it is clear that there was a step-change in youth turnout at this general election. Pollsters Ipsos Mori estimate that turnout among under-25s was 54 per cent, up from just 38 per cent in 2015. Young people remained less likely to vote than older generations (turnout among the over-65s was 71 per cent) but the size of the change was striking, and enough to make a real difference in an electoral system where small majorities can be overwhelmed by turnout changes.

There is also no doubt that Labour were the beneficiaries of the increased youth turnout. Support for the two parties is increasingly polarised by age: six out of ten under-25 year olds voted for Labour, while the same proportion of over 65s backed the Conservatives. This polarisation is so strong that age is now a far stronger predictor of voting intention than social class, which no longer maps neatly onto the two main parties. Indeed, the 2017 election showed some voting patterns running counter to traditional class politics. To the extent that the Conservatives made any gains outside Scotland, they did so by attracting Ukip

voters, boosting their success in the C2DE social groups that might have been expected to be Labour supporters in the past. Labour, meanwhile, made record gains among degree-educated and ABC1 voters.

However, while it's tempting to conclude that Corbyn's party are now driven by the interests of middle-class students, it's not as simple as that. Within the under-25s age group, Labour's strongest support is from DE voters, who are 70 per cent for Labour versus 52 per cent of young ABs. It seems that Corbyn's party have lost many older working class voters to the Conservatives via Ukip, but they are continuing to attract their children.

So what does this new coalition mean for politics? Does the rise of youth spring from Labour's move towards more recognisably leftwing policies, or will it cut across it? Some have suggested that Corbynism is now "populism for the middle classes", not so much a hard-left insurgency as a new accommodation with the middle-class voters that Tony Blair used to prioritise, or at least with their children. If age now trumps class, does that make Labour once more a party driven by the preferences of middle-class swing voters?

To some extent the answer to that question depends on the narrative of the election that now gains ground. It has become



Focusing on young people as if they are a single interest group obscures inequalities within generations

commonplace in some quarters to suggest that Corbyn's gains result from a 'bribe' for students, attracted by the promise of an £11bn measure to abolish tuition fees. This is, to put it mildly, a selectively-applied criticism, not often levelled at policies benefiting pensioners. But more importantly, this language drives the politics down a blind alley, assuming that what is good for the young is bad for everyone else, and probably unaffordable anyway. To the extent that intergenerational fairness is framed as a straightforward contest of young against old, it still sounds a lot like the politics of austerity, asking only how to ration out scarce resources between competing groups of the more-or-less deserving. This is hardly an auspicious place to start a conversation about the renewal of the welfare state as the embodiment of a social compact between generations. If Labour is to turn its youth mandate to progressive ends, its first challenge is to move the debate away from zero-sum rhetoric, and instead champion the positive, solidaristic politics that Corbyn claims to represent, including solidarity across generations.

The second challenge, however, will be to confront the policy implications of holding together an electoral coalition of young people from very different socio-economic backgrounds. The tuition fees policy is not necessarily regressive – it depends on who goes to university in a post-fees world, and on the progressiveness of the taxation that funds universities in the future. But there are tough questions still to be answered, which would be obscured by a new focus on age rather than class. Appeals to intergenerational fairness sound superficially progressive, and they have the potential to open up previously untouchable policy questions such as how to reform a housing market that locks in inequality across and within generations. But such rhetoric can also draw a veil over perennial questions about what fairness really means: whether, for example, social justice is located in more or less universalism in public spending; in this year's budget or in the balance of tax and spend over decades. Focusing on young people as if they are a single interest group obscures inequalities within age groups and so ducks some vital policy questions.

Increased political engagement by young people has the potential to move British politics substantially to the left, but

it might also imply the triumph of a new, cohort-based idea of fairness over traditional class politics, with potentially regressive policy implications. If Labour are now in the business of preparing for government, these dilemmas must be confronted at some point. In the meantime, the challenge will be to make the conversation about the 2017 election a dialogue with young people, and not just about them. **F**

Kate Alexander Shaw is a postdoctoral researcher at the Sheffield Political Economy Research Institute (SPERI). She is the lead researcher on a new project, in collaboration with the Foundation for European Progressive Studies, on the political economy of young people in Europe. She is also completing a PhD in political science at the LSE



SPEAKING OUT

Labour has the opportunity and the duty to shape Brexit for the better —*Anneliese Dodds*

It was clear from the Queen's Speech that the government has not seen its disastrous performance in the general election as a sign that it needs to reflect and reconsider its approach to Brexit. The speech claimed that Conservative ministers "are committed to working with parliament, the devolved administrations, business and others to build the widest possible consensus on the country's future outside the European Union", and the accompanying notes said there have been 'hundreds' of meetings between government and stakeholders.

Yet my experience suggests that this is far from the truth. Many people I have spoken to have struggled to get meetings with government. Those who have got through the door have found such meetings to be largely unhelpful, with ministers only wanting to hear about the 'opportunities' arising from Brexit and not the risks. Not surprisingly, this is a difficult ask for the many sectors where the latter outweigh the former. Ever since the referendum result was known, I – along with several others – have been urging the creation of a nationwide Commission on Brexit, bringing

together businesses, trade unions, religious bodies, political parties and others. Such a commission would increase transparency and engagement, ensuring all parts of the country felt involved in this momentous process, and would ensure the diversity of thinking we desperately need if we are to get the best possible outcome.

Depressingly, over a year on from the referendum, it may now be too late for such a commission to play a meaningful role. As Keir Starmer has noted, if Theresa May continues in her secretive, autocratic manner – barely consulting with anyone in her own party much less beyond it – then any commission may end up being little more than a figleaf for poor government policies.

If the Tories are going to let the country down, and the scope for a government-organised national conversation has all but disappeared, then the Labour party must step up. First, that means acting as a tribune for all those who struggle to get a hearing from the Tories: from young people to those working in manufacturing, and from university students and staff to those engaged in the tourist economy. We must be their champions, and their defenders – protecting our communities from economic decline.

Second, we need to be the voice of 21st century diplomacy. The Conservative approach to Brexit is totally ignorant of the reality of modern-day international negotiations. When I was a Labour MEP, I saw at first-hand – with the EU-Canada CETA agreement – what happens when you try to conduct a modern-day trade deal behind closed doors. It does not work. You lose all moral authority and public buy-in because you are keeping your citizens out of the process. And you fail even on your own terms because the nature of modern communications means that these things make it out into the public domain anyway. The same will be true of Brexit. Labour must push for an open, collaborative approach that allows citizens to have sight of, and the chance to contribute to, the final deal.

Finally, Labour must be the voice of expertise when it comes to the EU itself. As an avowedly pro-European party, Labour has been at the heart of EU decision-making for the last 40 years. We are trusted and respected by our European allies on the centre-left but also beyond. The Tories, on the other hand, have turned their back on their traditional centre-right allies and spent years alienating almost everyone on the continent. Again, the Queen's Speech exposed how limited the government's grasp of our relationship with the EU actually is. It

intimated there would be seven 'policy area' bills, seemingly plucked from thin air, to cover those sectors most likely to be affected by Brexit. The missing policy areas are conspicuous by their absence: nothing on workers' rights, nothing on the environment, nothing on compensating for the EU structural funds which go to the most impoverished areas of the country, and nothing on the jewels in the UK's crown, so heavily dependent on our EU membership – universities, science and research. Labour must force these vital issues onto the agenda.

The Labour party must assume the responsibility the Conservatives are ducking. We must speak up for our constituents and those who so far have had no voice in the debate. We must advocate for a mature, transparent approach to the negotiations. And we must use our EU expertise and connections to push for a deal that works with our European neighbours and not against them. Without that strong Labour voice, Theresa May and the Tory lemmings behind her will take our country off a cliff. **F**

Anneliese Dodds is MP for Oxford East. She was previously MEP for the south east region



RURAL THREAD

One nation socialism means tackling problems in the countryside as well as the cities —*David Drew*

Labour success in rural areas seems oxymoronic. Yet we have won the Stroud constituency four times over the last 20 years and Stroud by every definition is at least a semi-rural seat. More rural still, Labour has consistently won constituencies like Bolsover (yes Dennis, it really is rural), Bishop Auckland and Hemsworth.

Labour also has a proud history in the rural parts of Britain. The antecedents of Labour have as much to do with the countryside as they do urban areas. Read E P Thompson, Harry Tawney or Eric Hobsbawm if you want disabusing of the classic Conservative trope that Labour is purely an urban construct. In fact the



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labour movement's rural history remains terribly under-researched and undervalued. That's why we should be proud to celebrate Tolpuddle – not just from a sense of nostalgia but also because it points us in a direction that if we want to travel in will pay dividends.

Yet part of Labour's problems with rural areas is that we have continually undersold ourselves in regard to what we can offer the countryside. Some of the great reforming acts of Labour have involved rural areas, whether that be forming the National Parks, introducing the right to roam, or creating an agricultural policy that lasted for 30 years after 1945.

There is no better example of this than what happened under New Labour. The period between 1999 and 2004 was a golden era for rural policymaking, with delivery of very positive rural programmes and £1bn of largesse invested into ruralities. This was abundantly clear from PhD research that I undertook during my sabbatical from parliament. Rural schools were protected, the rural postal network was supported, brilliant new initiatives based on rural champions were initiated and the countryside became a place of vibrancy and excitement.

The party capitalised on this investment to some extent with rural conferences, rural manifestos and tool-kits for use by councillors elected in countryside seats. The Rural White Paper, published in 2000, was a model for what was possible in rural areas. Deliberately set in parallel with its urban counterpart, the paper – unlike

its Conservative predecessor – set out in considerable detail funded proposals for rural areas, including introducing ideas such as 'rural proofing'.

The problem was that despite the plaudits from academics, practitioners and rural communities themselves, a lack of confidence, financial cuts and losing its way in the policy field meant that Labour had virtually undone all the good it had achieved earlier by the end of its administration in 2010.

There is always a healthy debate over whether rural areas mirror urban areas in terms of the problems they face. The simple answer is yes, but the solution to those problems requires greater sensitivity and scaled intervention to make a difference. New Labour proved conclusively that with appropriate policy interventions, sufficient resources being applied and a consistency of approach then great things are possible.

If we can look beyond the sterile debate of whether or not Labour should completely disown Blairism and Brownism, then New Labour in terms of the countryside, for a time, had much to commend itself for. The reality is that rural areas could and should contribute much more to the UK's economic, social and political fabric and should not be seen as a backwater.

So why does it matter now if Labour ignores rural areas? It can rely upon the cities and conurbations to win, can't it? There are two reasons why this position is wrong. First, we should not only speak the language of one nation socialism – we

should try to apply it in practice. Second, Labour's situation in the countryside is far from hopeless. Some of the biggest increases in votes in the Labour vote in the recent general election occurred in rural constituencies. If the electorate are yearning for an active Labour party in their area, why aren't we trying to provide it? ■

Dr David Drew is MP for Stroud. He previously represented the seat from 1997 to 2010



A QUESTION OF TRUST

Scottish Labour now has an opportunity to build on its election success —*Katherine Sangster*

At the start of the general election campaign, the received wisdom in Scotland was that the best Labour could expect was for Ian Murray to hold onto his seat in Edinburgh South. As the campaign progressed, Scottish Labour started to grow in confidence, and party activists dared to talk out loud not only of holding there, but about winning East Lothian. But none of us would have dared to dream the end result. Scottish Labour returned seven MPs to Westminster and narrowly missed out in several more seats. After the 2015 result, it had felt as if Labour was down and out in Scotland for a generation. So what happened?

Many of us who had campaigned in the local elections had picked up on a notable change in the public's mood towards the SNP. Time and time again we heard: "Anyone but the SNP" from voters with many campaigners reporting real anger directed at Nicola Sturgeon's party. However, this protest vote wasn't necessary going to come to us.

The nature of the voting system in the local elections where voters rank candidates in order of preference did allow us to open up a genuine conversation with voters, while the timing of the general election so soon afterwards meant we could continue to focus on domestic issues, with the SNP's failings in health and education dominating the doorstep conversations and the TV debates.

The real turning point was the launch of the manifesto. Labour had produced a set of policies which articulated the values people thought it should stand for clearly and boldly. Jeremy Corbyn's conviction and authenticity were clear but just as importantly in Scotland our candidates spoke with the same authenticity and articulated their own experiences in their communities.

Paul Sweeney – one of the surprise victors on election night – was a shipyard worker and his campaign focused on his local credibility and his involvement in the restoration of Victorian winter gardens in his part of Glasgow; Martin Whitfield was a primary teacher in his local school. When they spoke about urban regeneration or the impact of poverty on attainment levels, they spoke with empathy and in doing so, won the right to be heard.

After three years of being shouted at by voters or facing people who refused to make eye contact with you, the experience of running street stalls where you run out of stickers or door-knocking sessions where you run out of posters was somewhat disconcerting. The joy and energy among party members here was – and is – palpable and this must not be lost but used to build up the party from the roots.

But Labour certainly cannot afford to be complacent. The Conservatives are on the march, with their vote share almost doubling since 2015.

Some in Scottish Labour will argue that a more radical campaign should have been fought. They feel that the strong stance against a second referendum harked back to the Better Together campaign and was therefore damaging. Others are still incredibly proud of the part they played in keeping the UK together. That tension within the party will not go away.

And in the country as a whole, we are still some way off moving the political debate beyond the constitution. The challenge for Scottish Labour – which it failed in the 2015 general election and the Scottish elections – is to articulate the benefits of the UK and oppose a second referendum without alienating the people who voted yes. It's a difficult balancing act and no two constituencies are the same.

Beyond the constitution, how should we build on our most recent success and where should our priorities lie?

A couple of weeks after the election, the Scottish parliament passed its first two new pieces of legislation in over a year: the first a cut in air passenger duty and the other legalising the docking of working dogs' tails. Both were supported by the Conservatives.

It just goes to show that the SNP do not govern in Holyrood with the radicalism they claim in Westminster. So our seven MPs need to campaign against Tory austerity and demonstrate they can make a difference, whilst our MSPs hold the SNP to account in Holyrood.

For two years, Scottish Labour has either been hated or written off as an irrelevance. Now that the voters are listening, we need to keep talking with them about the issues they care about. The rebuilding of trust and engagement has begun but the lessons of the past are still too painful to be forgotten. ■

Katherine Sangster is national manager for the Scottish Fabians and campaigned in East Lothian in the election



THE NEXT INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Green, high-quality jobs are vital for the future

—Alex Sobel

After the historic and unexpected general election result we must reflect on what brought us success and where we can improve to deliver a Labour majority at the next election.

The result came as a shock to many within the media and polling industries. However, to those of us campaigning on the ground, knocking on doors and talking to people from all walks of life, it became obvious that the Conservative message wasn't resonating. Labour had an offer and a direction of travel which were much more popular than the polling or media output suggested. Every day we saw more and more people either discovering or returning to Labour. This was largely driven from the national level. Our manifesto went down very well. However, another major factor, especially here in my constituency, was the hard work and dedication of the hundreds of volunteers who came out doorknocking and leafleting. The energy was palpable, most obviously when Jeremy Corbyn came to the constituency and around 5000 people came out to see him. The ground campaign was

coupled with a social media campaign which highlighted the issues in which local people would be interested – whether school cuts for parents or tuition fees for students. Perhaps most importantly, the volunteers were able to engage many unregistered and disengaged residents of the constituency and encourage them both to register and then to vote. This led to us having the biggest increase in the number of people registered to vote in the country, and pushed up overall turnout on the day.

But while we were able to win in Leeds North West, gain 30 other constituencies and increase our share of both seats and overall votes, we still have work to do and issues to address in order to form a government.

Labour needs a transformative programme – one which brings real change to the communities which have lost out in the last 30 years due to post-industrial decline. Our industrial strategy, launched during the campaign, recognises this. Many communities across our country have been forgotten and the people there are rightly angry and disillusioned with politics and politicians. Our post-industrial society is weighted towards the service sector over manufacturing and towards industries which are less labour-intensive with a lower skills base and poorer pay than the jobs they replaced. This loss of skilled jobs and loss of organised workplaces has led to a fragmentation of communities and a disconnect with other parts of the UK as well as the EU. All of this needs to be addressed.

We need an overall target for industrial growth, combined with rebalancing targets focused on employment, research and development, high-tech skill training, quality of workplace rights and reduction of carbon emissions – taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by the green agenda for new, high-quality jobs. Our commitment to ensuring that 60 per cent of the UK's energy will come from low carbon or renewable sources is crucial here. We should see manufacturing as a key element of growth, with a manufacturing revival fit for the 21st century – one which maintains sustainability and the preservation of our environment as central goals and which works towards decarbonising industry entirely and producing a greener generation of workers.

As our industrial strategy says, the green and sustainable energy sector should be a major element of any manufacturing initiative Labour puts forward. We should aim to create an 'energy revolution' by taking steps such as reforming ownership of the grid – including common, state and innovative

forms of ownership – which will open the energy market to smaller companies and create a more competitive market. Fossil fuel penalties would support the use of renewables across the manufacturing, business and domestic energy sectors. The UK has the potential to be a world leader in the building, development and manufacturing of green and renewable technology.

I am so proud of what we have achieved as a party over the last few months, but there is still more to do. We ran a great election campaign, produced a great manifesto setting out a fairer, more equal society and have been rewarded with our new seats, such as mine in Leeds North West. We need to use these victories as a springboard to help our manufacturing and renewable industries and the left behind communities of Great Britain. Labour must build a new industrial revolution that puts the environment and the workers of our country at its heart. **F**

Alex Sobel is MP for Leeds North West



TIME TO ACT

We must give communities a voice on housing
—Sarah Jones

In the last edition of the *Fabian Review*, Steve Hilditch wrote a convincing analysis of the housing crisis and Labour housing policy. One line in particular stands out after the disaster at Grenfell Tower.

Steve called for a ‘revolution in standards’ for tenants: ‘We don’t accept hazardous food or cars, why allow hazardous homes?’ The tragic prescience of these words make it all the more important that those of us entering parliament keep them front of mind.

In the coming weeks and months much will be written, rightly, about building regulations and product standards. But problems with housing in the UK go much deeper than cladding. We need to look at why these problems were not addressed and give a voice to those who have been silenced.

The Queen’s Speech, like the Conservative manifesto which preceded



© Matt Brown

it and the White Paper on housing which preceded that, featured glaring omissions as well as policies which entirely fail to grasp the scale and nature of the dual crises of housing supply and housing standards.

People can see the scale of government failure on housing since 2010. Labour must be alive to that collective epiphany. If I’ve learned one thing in my first few weeks as an MP it is that issues rise and fall not just on their merit, but on the ability of MPs to seize the day and not let opportunities pass by. Housing must be an even more central issue for our party as we move forward.

Our housing policies resonated with so many voters at the general election because they reflected the scale of the challenge we face.

In Croydon Central, I stood against the sitting housing minister, Gavin Barwell. Housing was one of our most prominent issues, not least because voters raised the issue themselves so regularly. An independent candidate even quit his job as an estate agent to run on a single issue platform: housing.

I have no doubt that a surge in young voters and private renters, angry at a government and a housing minister who had failed to stand up for them, played a part in Labour’s victory in Croydon. The problems of the 67,000 Croydon residents privately renting, paying extortionate amounts for often poor conditions, were acknowledged by the Tories but not addressed.

I worked in the housing sector before coming into parliament – running campaigns at Shelter and as a director in a housing association. You don’t have to work in housing long to understand the catastrophic collective failure of the state to create the conditions where we can build the homes we need, protect those who find themselves homeless, give any kind of voice to those languishing in bad housing or take responsibility for creating decent as well as affordable homes. There is no simple

funding stream and no national coordinated strategy. It is Tory, small-state government at its most pernicious.

Housing associations are building where they can, but as major landlords dealing with welfare reform, the rent cap and right to buy, there are limits on what they can do. Many councils, like Croydon, are leading the way by stimulating an increase in affordable housebuilding capacity. Croydon is investing directly through its own development company, Brick by Brick. But they have one hand tied behind their back as government won’t allow them to borrow against existing stock, even when that borrowing is for investment in new homes. Meanwhile the freedoms of permitted development allow private developers to build inappropriate housing developments in my constituency, with the council or anyone else powerless to oversee (or act on) standards.

Labour is giving this issue the time and focus it deserves. We have pledged a new Department for Housing and to build 100,000 council and housing association homes a year for genuinely affordable rent or sale. But we also need a more fundamental debate about giving people and communities the voice they deserve – on housing and a whole host of other issues. The anger at not being heard and the collective failure of politicians to listen, contributed to Brexit. It also contributed to the youth vote surge at the recent election and Labour must act or we will lose that support.

Some of the debate on housing is about funding. But it is also about reform – we must take a stand for real change. We need to allow councils to build and to give communities a real stake, and a real voice, in this debate, regardless of property value. Only then can we have the chance of achieving the revolution in housing standards and supply which is so desperately needed by so many. **F**

Sarah Jones is MP for Croydon Central

A final push

Labour won this campaign – but its task at the next election will be a complicated one, as *Lewis Baston* explains



Lewis Baston
is a writer on politics
and elections

ONE SHOULD NOT slip into thinking that Labour ‘won’ the 2017 election. The Conservatives were still ahead on votes and seats and formed a government – shaky, to be sure, but Tory ministers are still in place in Whitehall and taking the decisions.

But equally, the temptation to belittle what was achieved on 8 June should be resisted. Labour ‘won’ the campaign, achieving a result radically better than all the indicators at the start of the campaign and for the previous year which had pointed to humiliating defeat. Labour had got close enough to wreck the Conservatives’ self-confidence and prevent them from carrying out many of their policies. Labour required an upheaval on the scale of 1945 or 1997 to get a 1-seat majority given the pattern of the election results in 2015, but after 2017 a fairly normal swing will suffice to put Labour in power to deliver a social democratic agenda. It is reasonable to be pleased and excited by Labour’s position after June 2017.

What Labour achieved was historically unusual. There have been few occasions on which a government has called an early election at a time and on an issue of its choosing and lost its majority – 2017 is therefore in a category with February 1974, 1951 and 1923 (and only in 1974 and 2017 was the government expecting an enhanced majority when it called the election).

As several commentators including Hugo Rifkind and the Fabians’ own Andrew Harrop have noted, the 40 per cent Labour vote in 2017 was an unlikely coalition of those who were voting for the party *despite* Jeremy Corbyn and the left turn, and those who were voting Labour precisely *because* of Corbyn and his style of politics. The shape of the campaign, in an unplanned and perverse way, helped to accomplish this by talking in different ways to different people. Corbyn brought hope and change and a sense that voting Labour was making a positive ethical statement; the manifesto was a mainstream social democratic platform that was acceptable to all wings and had content that could be used to attract targeted groups of voters. The party’s professionals campaigned as usual; MPs felt the need to stress

their personal records and the party made good use of the popularity of Sadiq Khan and Carwyn Jones in London and Wales. Early in the election there were complaints that there were at least three Labour campaigns going on, poorly co-ordinated with each other, but in retrospect this was probably helpful. In May 2015 the discipline and focus of the Conservative campaign proved to be the winning approach, but since then two successful campaigns – Leave and Labour – have done well with mixed messages.

Electoral coalitions are negative as well as positive. Theresa May’s campaign helped conjure Labour’s coalition into being. The terms on which the election was called – a demand for a semi-authoritarian mandate to ‘crush the saboteurs’ – frightened and alienated young and liberal England. It was enough, once the campaign had sparked, to get them campaigning and voting against the Tories, which in practical terms meant voting Labour. The next stage was to remind the traditional Labour voters they intended to convert that giving the Conservatives all the levers of power might not be a great idea – they would do things like implement their ‘dementia tax’, or retreat from it in a muddle, and prioritise fox hunting.

Labour’s task of holding its coalition together and broadening it out by that crucial few percentage points to winning is going to be tricky. I mean it as a compliment when I compare Corbyn to Harold Wilson, but can following Wilson in masterful evasion and triangulation on Europe, immigration and even nationalisation and disarmament really continue to bridge the gaps between Labour’s traditionalists, young liberals and socialists?

The next stage has to involve persuading people who voted Conservative in 2017 (whether that was a temporary, situation-specific vote or a deeper affiliation) to come over to Labour. The optimistic perspective is that the 2017 Conservative vote was even further above its normal levels than the 2017 Labour vote. It should thus be less difficult to peel off some of the 43 per cent of voters who voted Conservative in 2017 than it was to attract some of the 36 per cent who supported them in 2010, because

they have a weaker attachment to the Tories. They are unlikely to feel any more enthusiastic after another term of Conservative government that will probably be turbulent and unproductive.

The 2017 election is not a reversal to the sort of two-party politics that Britain knew between 1931 and 1974. The parties in that era had deep roots in collective experience, mediated through class, union membership and identity. The high share of the vote for the two main parties in 2017 was a product of consumer choice and the unappealing state of the smaller parties, and the 40–42 per cent vote shares could vanish as easily as they arose if another exciting option comes along. As the rise and fall of Ukip in 2013–17 demonstrated, the effect of third party insurgencies on the balance between the main parties can be complex and unpredictable.

The politics of Scotland should remind us that electoral change can come chaotically and quickly; the SNP's total domination lasted only two years. The Scottish three-party split in 2017 left an astonishing number of seats on a knife-edge. A modest swing of 5 per cent in any direction produces big variations in the number of MPs: Labour ranges from 1 to 30, the Conservatives from 5 to 23, and the SNP from 7 to 48. This has major implications for the overall parliamentary arithmetic even if England's electoral scene is stable.

But England's map is in transition. For the elections from 2001 to 2015 constituency-level change was within limits set by the Thatcher and Blair landslides. In the Tory upswing of 1979 and 1983 they gained 30 fresh seats, which they had either never won before in a general election or else had not done so since 1935, of which 16 were still Conservative in the 2017 election. In Labour's upswing from 1987 to 1997 they gained 37 fresh seats in England and Wales and six in Scotland, of which 20 voted Labour in 2017 plus one in Scotland. There have been more constituency level breakthroughs in the elections of 2015 and 2017. Both main parties won seats in 2017 that they hadn't two years before – five of them for the Tories (Copeland, Derbyshire North East, Mansfield, Stoke South, Walsall North) and four for Labour (Canterbury, Kensington, Portsmouth South, Sheffield Hallam). The names of these seats encapsulate the change as well as anything – the Conservatives breaking new ground in white working class, Leave-voting, home-owning areas and Labour winning youthful, educated, cosmopolitan, Remain-voting and renting areas.

The lists of marginal seats contain some unfamiliar names, principally among the new Conservative targets from Labour – if the Conservative landslide had materialised in 2017 it would have involved fresh gains in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Dudley North, Ashfield, Bishop Auckland, Penistone & Stocksbridge, Wakefield, Stoke North, Great Grimsby, Bassetlaw, Workington and, most bizarrely for anyone with memories of the miners' strikes of 1972 to 1984, Rother Valley. A further swing to Labour of 5 per cent would see the red flag flying for the first time over Chingford & Woodford Green, Southport, Truro & Falmouth, Cities of London & Westminster and Worthing East & Shoreham.

Labour's task in the next election is therefore a complicated one. It needs to protect its vulnerable marginals that have been slipping towards the Tories over the years and came near the brink in 2017, and in doing so perhaps regain some of its losses in similar seats like Mansfield and Stoke South. It needs to continue the trend in its favour in southern and urban seats, which requires inspiring the young, urban liberals and renters to go out and vote again. It also needs an incremental rise in support in some of the seats full of middle class swing voters that Blair was particularly pleased to win in 1997 and in which Corbyn's party beat the national swing in 2017 – Watford, Milton Keynes, Northampton, Swindon, Reading...

Some elections, although it may not seem it at the time, are actually pretty good ones to lose as long as you don't lose too badly. Whoever won in February 1974, or 1992, was in for a rough ride, to say nothing of the fatal misadventure of being largest party in a hung parliament in May 1929. While nothing is certain, it seems highly likely that power in 2017 will be a similar poisoned chalice, with public services creaking under the strain, ominous economic indicators and the most complex and risky government project since 1945 to deliver without a parliamentary majority and with a divided Cabinet and party.

Since election night the government's self-confidence has been broken, as Major's was after Black Wednesday in 1992. The circumstances produce forced and unforced errors, internal division, weak leadership and failed policies, and a sense of irritation among the electorate that a government has overstayed its welcome. Power, in the sense of the ability to make the political weather, starts to slip away. Being an opposition to such a government is fun, as veterans of 1992–97 (and the Tories who were there in 2007–10) can testify. The most serious aspects of the challenge are now those that are within Labour's power to change. The 2017 manifesto was a marvellous vote winner. But the task now is to devise a set of policies that are not just good for getting votes, but can shape a governing agenda as did the manifestos of 1945 and 1997.

The party cannot refight its successful 2017 campaign, because time will have moved on and much discussion during the campaign will be about Labour's plans for government. The hysterical screeches of the popular press cannot get any nastier than 2017 but the real prospect of a majority Labour government next time will generate more piercing scrutiny of the party's agenda and ability. Labour needs to build support for its policies and philosophy, and faith in the competence of its leaders to deliver positive change, between elections, and communicate competently to the wider electorate. Civil society, business and foreign governments will all be more interested in a party that appears an election away from governing rather than one that is heading into the wilderness, and Labour needs to be responsive and ready. The 2017 election has created openness and potential where there seemed only the deadening prospect of Conservative hegemony. Labour's electoral task is not easy, of course, but it is hill-walking rather than mountain-climbing. ■

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Politics in the platform age

The election marked a turning point and a radical Labour victory is now within grasp, argues *Jeremy Gilbert*



Jeremy Gilbert is professor of cultural and political theory at the University of East London

WHAT MADE THE extraordinary and unexpected result of the 2017 election possible? Several popular explanations have been widely circulated.

The first attributes the result to contingent decisions and the effects of personalities. According to this story, it was all about the campaign, there was no problem with the polls, if the election had been held in April then Theresa May would have won a landslide. Corbyn is a very good campaigner and she is a very bad one, the Labour manifesto was popular whereas the Tory one was uninspiring: case closed, upset explained.

Few historians would take very seriously the proposition that, for example, the 1945 election was won by Labour just because they had really great poster designs or Churchill sounded a bit tired on the radio. There is no reason why we should assume that any such explanation for the 2017 result is adequate either. Apart from anything else, such an account simply ignores two key issues. It ignores the existence of the mass mobilisation which was so obviously crucial to Labour's success, and it ignores the crucial question of how it is, and what it means, that the most relentless media attack on Labour in its political history (and that is saying something), which is what could be seen in the pages of the *Sun*, the *Express* and the *Mail* during the last weeks of the campaign, proved incapable of reversing Labour's forward march.

There is a slightly different explanation on offer, which is far more credible, albeit not wholly adequate. From this perspective we are, more than ever, in an era of extreme voter volatility, with non-voters mobilisable, and swing voters swinging, in greater numbers than ever before.

Perhaps a better way to describe this situation would be to say that it is one of greatly increased *reversibility*. Political outcomes and events which looked like they could not be altered any time soon can now, it turns out, quickly be turned around. The return of the Tories in Scotland surely stands as some evidence for this idea – nobody saw

it coming, and nobody really thought that it was even possible. But this leaves open the question of why this peculiar form of reversibility has emerged, and should draw our attention to the fact that 'voter volatility' is not a new political phenomenon. Commentators have been commenting on it since the early 70s.

From the factory to the platform

We can shed light on the current situation if we consider the explanations which have been offered for voter volatility throughout that time. These explanations have often pointed to the emergence of a more fragmented, pluralistic and individualist society than the one which preceded it, in which old class loyalties are weakening and a more consumerist attitude to politics is prevailing among voters. Long before British commentators recognised the existence of something called 'neoliberalism', these shifts were understood, by writers such as Robin Murray, as consequences of the emergence of 'post-Fordism.'

This was the name given to the new systems of production and distribution enabled by the spread of robotics, electronic communications and rapid global transport. These encouraged companies to break up into specialised units, outsourcing many aspects of their activity, servicing ever-more specialised consumer niches, breaking up supply chains into series of short-term contracts, promoting competition between firms seeking market share and between workers looking for employment. The break-up of political blocs, the appearance of smaller parties, the rise in the number of swing voters, were all seen as expressions of these underlying economic tendencies to fragmentation, specialisation and individualisation.

In the 1980s, the influential magazine *Marxism Today* famously theorised the success of Thatcherism in terms of its capacity to capture this new terrain and turn it to its advantage. This was compared with Labour's success in the 1940s, building a social democratic order on the 'Fordist'

foundations of manufacturing industry, full employment and faith in the future; all infused by a conformist mass culture which discouraged excessive individualism. The two great epochal elections of the past century – in 1945 and 1979 – can therefore both be seen as having been, in part, responses to more fundamental shifts in the way in which capitalism was organised, shaped as much as anything by changes in the available technologies of production and communication. So can the 2017 election be understood in comparable terms?

I think it can, and must be. In recent years, post-Fordism has itself been increasingly displaced by a new form of capitalism, relying on a new generation of technological innovations. The corporations which define our age – Facebook, Google, Apple, Uber, YouTube – do so not through their specialised fragmentation in pursuit of niche markets, but through the constitution of massive monopolistic platforms which enable them to profit directly from the creative activity or labour of their users.

What kind of culture they are producing in the process, and what the consequences might be for politics, we are only slowly beginning to discern. But what seems clear is that this new context enables certain forms of aggregations and collectivisation to take place on certain scales – for example facilitating hundreds of thousands of people joining a single political party in a short space of time – while also encouraging fluidity, mobility and dispersal on other scales. The ‘viral’ logic of social media culture displays both of these qualities at once, and we’ve learned in recent years that it can also apply to the domain of electoral politics. Just look at how rapidly Scottish voters swarmed behind the SNP in 2015, and how many of them have already taken their votes elsewhere.

But this new context is not only characterised by the changeability of the electorate and the power of Californian corporations. The same platform technologies which generate billions for Silicon Valley also proved decisive in the election. Online and mobile apps enabled hundreds of thousands of Labour activists to mobilise in a manner quite unfamiliar to those of us who remember the ‘control freak’ campaigns of the 1990s, when every canvasser worked to a script and disciplined ‘message control’ was exercised throughout the party. Often effectively self-organised, they travelled to marginals in their thousands, and, genuinely enthused by the manifesto, knocked on doors to persuade people to vote Labour.

Does this mean that we have entered a new era of mass democracy, in which the triumph of a new wave of democratic socialism is all but guaranteed? Yes and no. We clearly are in a new era. But the persistent fluidity of this new context means that we can’t dismiss the significance of some of the localised and contingent factors which helped Labour to achieve the result that it did, and the possibility that they may alter soon too.

One thing that is now evident from the election result is that May’s strategy of appealing to socially conservative, pro-leave Labour voters proved catastrophically unsuccessful outside of the Midlands. Across the country Labour

achieved its result by inspiring a new social coalition which included working class voters from all but the most traditionally conservative of the Labour heartlands, young voters of almost all class backgrounds, across every region, and many affluent voters frightened for their children’s future, at a time when even the offspring of the professional classes have seen their historic privileges eroded out of existence by neoliberalism and austerity. In this context, May’s implicit rejection of cosmopolitan culture proved to have a far narrower appeal than expected, and actively turned off swathes of wealthy voters who voted Remain and had voted for Cameron only two years previously.

Challenges for Labour

This fact has not been lost on the Tories. The advisers credited with authoring that strategy have already been dispatched, while George Osborne has been openly crowing about the failure of May’s rejection of neoliberal, cosmopolitan globalism. Under these circumstances there is a very obvious danger for Labour. If a new Tory leader – Boris Johnson or whoever else – explicitly opts for a different direction, committing to soft Brexit and a return to Cameron’s social liberalism as well as a public end to austerity, then there is a serious danger that large numbers of those affluent voters could return to the Tory fold. Labour needs to keep them onside by continuing to push an agenda that looks modern, optimistic and in tune with the times. The ‘Alternative Models of Ownership’ paper published shortly before the election, arguing for new forms of employee-owned company as a progressive way forward in the age of platform capitalism, represents an excellent start. We need much more of that. Our socialism must look like it belongs to the 21st century, or those voters will abandon us for something that does.

At the same time, there is no getting away from that fact that, in the Midlands above all, the Tories *did* take voters from UKIP who had been

Labour up until very recently. Must we abandon them as relics of an old world that we can leave behind, now that we can win votes in Kensington and Canterbury? Not only can we not afford to do that if we actually want to win an election; to do so would be an abdication of Labour’s historic moral mission to defend the vulnerable and offer security to those who lack it. I don’t think that tacking to the right on immigration can work for Labour now, especially when so much of its new coalition is motivated by a rejection of May’s appeal to social conservatism; but neither will patronising the ‘left behind’, or ignoring them.

These are the communities in which Labour’s new campaigning spirit will be needed more than ever before. We will have to work there day in, day out, to make our case that it is neoliberalism and deindustrialisation that has wrecked their communities, not immigrants in search of a better life. If we can do that, enabling these voters to feel that they too have a real stake in a democratic, egalitarian future for Britain, then there is every possibility of a historic radical Labour victory within the foreseeable future. ■

**Labour needs to
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Lessons from the campaign trail

Labour's positive election campaign needs to be a stepping stone to a win next time, says *Olivia Bailey*

I learned a lot during my time as the Labour party candidate in Reading West. I went through two pairs of shoes, accidentally excluded vegetables from my diet, and gained a newfound respect for the resilience of politicians. My result, like others across the country, defied all expectations – and it is crucial we understand what went well for Labour and what didn't. Here are my five lessons from the campaign trail.

1. We must never forget the impotence of opposition

During the campaign people broke down in tears as they described the impact of disability benefit changes, or the cost of social care. I lost count of the number of parents who told me how worried they were about the impact of school cuts on their children's education. One head teacher told me about a pupil at her school who had tried to commit suicide, and was then put on a nine-month waiting list to see a counsellor. I have been left in no doubt about the disastrous reality of Tory Britain. But I have also been left frustrated by the impotence of opposition. Labour got a good result, but it didn't win the election. We've got to do everything we can to ensure this election result is a stepping stone to government, not a high water mark.

2. We need to enthuse our working-class base

I wasn't expecting the result to be as good as it was. My conversations with voters suggested that traditional Labour supporters were moving away from us in some of the areas that Labour has always been able to rely on. I had lots of conversations about immigration, national security and management of the economy – and I had a fair few doors shut in my face. My experience was replicated across the country, and explains why Labour HQ felt pessimistic before election-day.

Part of the reason we allowed ourselves to believe the result would be so bad is because we were spending most of our time talking to the people we knew had voted for us in the past. According to YouGov, Labour held on to 71 per cent of the people who voted Labour in 2015. This means that around six and a half million of the more than nine million people who voted Labour in 2015 voted Labour again in 2017. At this election, Labour secured 12.8 million votes, which implies it gained more than six million votes from people who didn't vote Labour last time around.

This remarkable increase in vote was mainly thanks to higher turnout and large numbers of switchers from other parties. Demographically, the voters Labour attracted were likely to be graduates, ethnic minorities, public

THE POWER OF THE MOVEMENT: *Olivia Bailey – and friends – campaigning in Reading West*



sector workers or under 40. But Labour candidates were not wrong when they sensed a lack of enthusiasm amongst the working class. While Labour retained a marginal lead amongst social grades C2DE, this is not enough for a majority. Bristol academic Paula Surridge has shown that the more working-class a seat was, the more likely it was to swing to the Tories. This explains why Labour lost seats like Mansfield, which has been Labour since 1923.

Labour won't win seats like Reading West until it achieves the same level of enthusiasm amongst the working class as it does amongst the rest of the population. Labour also won't be able to form a majority government. Fabian analysis has shown that of the 64 most winnable seats Labour needs for a majority, 25 have an above average working class population. And Labour must have a particular focus on older working-class voters, given that the Conservatives performed particularly well amongst the over 55s.

3. We must remember the importance of hope

Jeremy Corbyn held a large and impressive rally in Reading. As I stood on the stage with him while the crowd chanted his name, he leant over and asked me how it was going on the doorstep. He wanted to know whether the public were warming to 'a certain man with a beard'. Yes, the public were warming to him, but Labour's relative success was about much more than just the man. It was about hope.

It is remarkable how often politicians think that gloomy warnings will be enough to convince people to vote for them. In the EU referendum, the Remain campaign talked almost exclusively about risk; whereas the Leave campaign had a hopeful message about the chance for more control and greater prosperity. In this election, Theresa May's strategy was based on scaring people about the risk of Jeremy Corbyn and the consequences of disorganised Brexit. But people voted for Labour because we were talking about how our country can be better.

The lesson of previous majorities is that Labour only wins when it has a positive vision. In 1945 we won because we promised to use the solidarity of the war to build a new country that worked for everyone. In the 1960s we spoke to emerging social liberalism and aligned ourselves with economic modernisation. For New Labour, it was the word

'new', an excitement about change, and a shared sense that Britain's best days were yet to come.

A Labour majority can be forged from the votes of people who want our country to change course, but only if Labour can develop a widely popular vision for what it wants that country to look like. The manifesto demonstrated that there can be an enthusiasm for more radical ideas, but Labour now needs to develop a blueprint for the future of our country. That blueprint needs to hold Labour's diverse electoral coalition together, whilst also reaching out to people who voted Conservative this time around.

4. We must never forget the power of our movement

At 10pm on election day, when the exit poll was announced, I nearly drove in to a lamppost. I was soaking wet from the last doorknocking session in the rain, and I'd just retrieved my friend from another ward so we could listen to the projections together. When I heard the news, I couldn't believe it. And when the projections started to suggest that Reading West could be in play, it was decided that I wouldn't be let back in front of the wheel. A car crash would have spoiled everyone's night. In an act of kindness that typified the party members who helped on my campaign, I got bundled in to a car and driven home where I was to wait for the call to come to the count. While we were just shy of victory, more than 22,000 people voted for me that day. They did so only because of the generosity, good humour and hard work of Labour party volunteers. It is amazing what you can achieve when you organise for what you believe in.

5 And finally, dads are embarrassing, however old you are

They say a father's pride is a wonderful thing and I got proof on the campaign trail. After I debated my opponent on the radio one morning, I checked twitter to see what people had made of me. A grand total of one notification popped up. My dad had tweeted @BBCBerkshire to say how well I'd done. I politely chastised him, yet subsequently caught him introducing himself as my dad on the doorstep. **F**

Olivia Bailey is deputy general secretary of the Fabian Society



Filling the vacuum

Labour's right has been devoid of ideas for years and now needs to come up with a new philosophy, writes *Philip Collins*



Philip Collins is a journalist at The Times

THE TWO MAIN political tribes are never more characteristically different than when they have just lost a general election. When the Conservatives lose, which they have now not done for 12 years, they do not indulge in much philosophical speculation about why. While not always explicitly blaming the electorate for being such damned fools, they do not usually regard the problem as demanding much in the way of inquiry. Just get better and win next time.

The Labour party greets every defeat with a gallery of half-remembered philosophy. It becomes all but impossible to leave the house without falling into a seminar in which a pious academic intones on why the electorate had no time for the something-or-other state and why this now needs to be replaced with a social democratic account of the politics of belonging. Or something like that. These days the same accounts are usually prefaced with the word 'digital'. Digital solidarity, the digital enabling state.

Politics, as Ronald Reagan once said, is simple but not easy. The reason Labour loses elections is usually simple and usually the same. Not enough of the electorate trust the party with their money. It is important to remember, as the Labour party surveys the 2017 election in a mood of triumph and standing ovations for the leader, that it did actually lose. A truly terrible campaigning prime minister running the worst political operation in living memory did still win. If Tony Blair is excluded from historical memory, which seems to be the cherished ideal of many Labour party members, then Labour has not won a general election for 43 years. The campaign in 2017 hardly ever got round to the economy but it is hard not to think that Labour's defeat was, in the end, due to the fact that not enough people regard Labour as economically credible.

Yet, for all that the post-mortem intellectual fiesta is usually rather indulgent, or for all that the simple explanation for a Labour defeat did just about hold, there is good reason this time for some philosophical reflection. The defeat for the Labour party in the election was nothing

compared to the defeat of the Labour right within the party. Those MPs who have withheld their confidence from their leader Jeremy Corbyn went into the 2017 campaign with an argument that, frankly, made no sense. Vote for me, not for a Labour government, they said. Vote for me safe in the knowledge that Jeremy Corbyn cannot be prime minister and hell will freeze over before John McDonnell is chancellor of the exchequer. Their slippery argument almost came undone and now, rather than simply fold, the right of the Labour party needs to do some serious thinking.

The right of the Labour party is in this fix precisely because, ever since the crash of 2008, it has been intellectually empty. Rudderless and without ideas, the right has relinquished the principle of hope to the left. Mr Corbyn might, to those of us who have watched him for a long time, be the most unlikely beneficiary of a cult of optimism but he is

and the right of the Labour party cannot look elsewhere for the blame. Since the Labour party fell out of love with New Labour nothing new has arisen to take its place. Nobody has been able to answer the question of what a viable Labour government would look like in a nation that is still running an annual deficit. Mr Corbyn's answer is to ignore the problem and throw money like confetti. Even if he succeeds in finding his way to power with such an irresponsible series of spending

commitments, the sheer folly of his programme would not be long in being disclosed. The Labour party has to be able to do better than this and, to do so, it is going to have to start thinking.

The nearest that anyone has come to philosophical renewal in the Labour party after Blair was the brief moment that a coalition between New and Blue Labour seemed possible. It already seems like ancient history but there was an attempt to corral James Purnell and Jon Cruddas together in an alliance to lead the party in 2010. The pair of them got on well and the philosophical marriage, although it might seem an arrangement of opposites at first, had a lot to commend it. The Gordon Brown view of the Labour party was, essentially, that equality could be

Since the Labour party fell out of love with New Labour, nothing new has arisen to take its place



engineered through a series of state programmes and give-aways through the tax system. It placed a huge reliance on the largesse and the benign capacity of the state. New and Blue Labour advocates shared an analysis that this could never work, even if it were ever desirable. They both had a respect for the sanctity and indigenous nature of liberty. They were both expressly patriotic. There were differences too, of course. New Labour was internationalist and Blue Labour was not. New Labour liked to stress the freedoms and prosperity of markets, Blue Labour made a point of their deficiencies. But the basic shared approach to politics promised a coalition within the Labour party that would have been both new, in political terms, and philosophically intriguing.

It still would. It would be a party that stressed the importance of work, earning and contribution. The quality of work, as well as the availability of work, would be a big concern. The century-long shift in the welfare state from a principle of contribution to a principle of need would be reversed. Those who had earned what they had would be favoured over those who had not earned it. The objective of public policy would be to improve and extend self-government so that people could live their life as they wish. Power should flow to the places people live so that they can shape their homes as they wish them to be. There is a lot to fill in but there is the outline there of a philosophical approach that is both rooted in the nation and looking out beyond its borders.

There is no sign of any of this in the current Labour party. For an organisation which has captured the sense of optimism among the young it remains curiously bereft of intelligent thought. Mr Corbyn's ideas on domestic policy, such as he has any at all, were stale when he first thought of them 40 years ago. Labour is not really analysing Britain with any profundity, still less coming to serious conclusions about a solution. It may be that there is a path to government that requires no further reflection – after all the Tories seem to find one – but there is no path that does not loop

back on itself. No government that arrives in power with nothing coherent to say will last long.

The Labour party is, at the time of writing, triumphant in defeat but intellectually incoherent. Taking the energy companies into public control is a solution in search of a problem, or ideology in search of something to do. The right of the Labour party does need to make it clear that it will not countenance such nonsense but it can only do that if it has an alternative prospectus to put in its place. The relevant analogy may yet come from France where, in 1981, President Mitterrand came to power with an avowedly left-wing programme for government but quickly realised that it was impossible to carry it out. He had to quickly revise his plans. The task for the Labour right is to be ready with that prospectus when the moment of need arrives, for it undoubtedly will. I say this not as an invitation to hostility. Mr Corbyn has earned the right to lead as he wishes and, if the Conservative government continues to show the capacity for self-destruction that it has managed since 2015, he may lead the party all the way. Perhaps the upshot of this thinking will be to supply a programme for government in a moment of crisis.

But it may be that such a programme will be needed anyway. There is a hole in British politics where a coherent left-of-centre prospectus ought to be. Whether that set of ideas is then put at the service of a Labour party which once again wants such a thing, or whether it is put at the service of a new entity, is a question for another day. But one truth remains in the ashes of many of the assumptions of politics that held until June 2017. Britain is a divided country but it is not yet an extreme country. If the choice on offer is a Tory government beholden to the ideologically-fixated on its right and a Labour government led by its left, then the vote has to go somewhere. But, with the huge exception of the cavalry of Corbyn's new voters, there is no reason to suppose this vote has split right and left with great enthusiasm. There is a vacancy in the middle. The first thing to put in the middle is a philosophy. **F**



Moving the centre

Emily Thornberry was one of the stars of Labour's election campaign. Now she wants the party to prepare for power, she tells *Kate Murray*

IT WAS ONE of the highlights of election night: Emily Thornberry, grinning like the Cheshire Cat, telling David Dimbleby that the Conservatives were heading for their very own coalition of chaos. The exchange, which saw Thornberry hailed on social media as the “Queen of Sass”, was a fitting end to an energetic campaign by the shadow foreign secretary in which she made scores of constituency visits and robustly promoted the Labour cause on radio and TV. But, as she admits, it had all begun very differently.

“We started off very low. I remember being in the tea room before the election speaking to MPs who genuinely thought they weren’t coming back,” she says. But then, two weeks out from polling day, the mood changed and Labour seemed to have “won permission to be heard”.

“The manifesto was the star – it gave us something we all coalesced around,” she says. “We showed Britain what Labour can be when we are united and what an unstoppable force we can be. It was like a snowball, getting bigger. People were genuinely wanting to listen to what Labour stood for. Jeremy continued to campaign in the way that only Jeremy does – and then there was a big enough turnout and those who said they were going to support Labour actually did come out and vote Labour.”

Thornberry is perhaps an unlikely Corbynista and indeed voted for Yvette Cooper in the 2015 leadership election. But she rejects any factional label – “I just believe I come from the heart of the Labour party and I believe I always have” – and says the decision to become, and remain, a shadow minister, was a simple one. “My view is that the party is the membership. That party of more than half a million people had overwhelmingly voted for Jeremy and it seemed to me that it was our duty to be a proper opposition, to be an alternative government and to make Jeremy the best leader he could be. That was what the membership wanted and what the country deserved.”

Not all of her parliamentary colleagues agreed, with the pre-election period being, Thornberry concedes, often ‘dreadful’ thanks to Labour’s very public spats. But arguments within the party, she believes, should have been seen off by the election campaign. “The major difference between us, in terms of the PLP, was ‘Is Jeremy electable or not?’ That is now sorted – so there is no real reason to have these major differences now. Of course there will be differences in terms of policy. There always have been, there always will be and that’s healthy. I don’t want the unity of the graveyard – but I do want unity. So where there are differences, let’s debate them, but let’s not do it in a silly personal way out in the media, fighting.”

For her, it’s disappointing then, that just weeks after the election and with a sense of optimism and new-found unity in the air, three Labour frontbenchers were sacked

and another stepped down over an amendment calling for the UK to remain within the single market and the customs union.

“It’s unfortunate. I don’t quite understand why Chuka [Umunna] thought it necessary to put down that amendment as a backbencher to the Queen’s Speech,” she says. “It seemed to me to be a brilliant opportunity for us to show the differences in the Tory party, to highlight the need for a public sector pay rise, for our alternative vision for fighting austerity. All of those things could have happened, but instead a lot of that space was taken up by debate about what was meant by Chuka’s amendment.”

In reality, she insists, there isn’t a “huge amount of difference” between the different positions within the party. “I think there’s a bit of tickboxing – ‘oh I’m in favour of the single market therefore I’m more pro-European than you,’” she says. “What we’ve been trying to hone in the leadership is an approach to the negotiations which is flexible but which gets maximum benefit for Britain in terms of our priorities – and our priorities are different from the Tories.”

What’s not in question, she suggests, is that the UK will leave the European Union. “I’m first and foremost a democrat. If we have instructions from the British people we do as we’re told,” she says. “It does seem to me that we have to go into this in good faith, on the basis that we have to leave the European Union. In my view we don’t have to go very far but we do have to leave. People need to hear that and believe us.”

But what about those who firmly believe that the people they represent want something very different? “Fitting a referendum into a parliamentary democracy is very difficult. But we’ve had a referendum and, while I respect those whose constituents overwhelmingly voted for remain and feel they must do everything they can to fight for remain, we are a national party. There has to be a party that tries to pull the 48 per cent and the 52 per cent together. We are not picking a side, we are trying to act on behalf of Britain and the best way to act on behalf of Britain in my view is for us to leave but to remain close.”

But the election, she says, was not so much about Brexit, as about austerity, and the lack of ideas that austerity represents. “It was about giving people confidence to believe it doesn’t have to be this way, that there is an alternative,” she says. And since the poll, there has been more evidence of the need for change, and for better government, in the shape of the Grenfell Tower tragedy. “How can it be that in the 21st century a tower can burn down, that people can leave in their t-shirt and knickers with nothing and have to run to church and hope that somebody donated a mattress? This is Britain in the 21st century – we are not a developing nation. It’s appalling that this is

I don’t want the unity of the graveyard, but I do want unity. So where there are differences, let’s debate them but not in a silly way

happening," she says. Here, she adds, Labour can offer a real alternative. "We have to be a party that believes in government, that believes in red tape, that believes in people's rights. It's not red in tooth and claw capitalism. We do need to temper capitalism, we do need to make our world fairer and that does mean putting in rules, that does mean investing in public services. All of these things are what make our lives rich and what make our communities work."

Thornberry's own Islington South constituency has, she underlines, a high proportion of social housing and high levels of deprivation – a far cry from the privileged metropolitan bubble it's sometimes suggested to be. The 'north London elite' tag is one that has been thrown at her, particularly in the wake of her resignation from Ed Miliband's shadow cabinet over a tweeted picture from the Rochester by-election campaign of a house complete with white van and English flags.

But she says misconceptions about her patch are often matched by misconceptions about her.

"I was brought up on a council estate – my parents divorced when I was seven, we were made homeless and we went on to a big council estate. My mum was a single parent and lived on benefits and I failed my 11-plus and went to a secondary modern," she recalls. "On the other hand, I'm a barrister, I live in Islington and I'm successful. Things are never as they seem."

Does she feel women politicians get a particularly hard time, particularly in the social media age? "It's definitely different being a woman politician," she says. "We tend to be seen as being more colourful but I also think there's something about our personality, our family and our background which seems to be more relevant in people's minds. The whole personal package seems to be more important than a man in a grey suit with a blue tie and grey hair who is able to be almost a blank canvas. There are positives but there are also negatives."

Her background as a lawyer, she says, runs like a thread through her approach to politics: in the importance she places on good government, good regulations and above all fairness. In her role as shadow foreign secretary, it means she is determined to shape an ethical Labour foreign policy, where the UK works collectively with other countries in accordance with international law.

"We need to be less arrogant, more confident in our own ability, the talents that we have and our ethics. For me these are the British values I'm proud of," she says. "At a time like this we could step up and give a lead. Against all the background of international noise, we could be the ones saying let's work together, and move forward."

In particular Thornberry would like to see the UK, which 'holds the pen' in the UN Security Council over Yemen and so is responsible for drafting resolutions, do more to stand up to Saudi Arabia over its role in the conflict there. "We continue selling arms to Saudi Arabia despite what's going on in Yemen – despite the atrocities, despite the bombing of fields and infrastructure and weddings and funerals which seem on the face of it to be in breach of international law. We shouldn't be selling them arms in those circumstances

and yet we seem fearful about dealing with it, about standing up to them and saying this is wrong."

Similarly, she believes the UK should drop its 'embarrassingly obsequious' attitude to Donald Trump and hold the current US administration to account on issues such as climate change. "We are putting all our eggs in the Trump basket, he's just smashing them up and there doesn't seem to be anything the Tory government can do about it," she says. "If they can't even influence one country on climate change, how strong and stable are they when it comes to negotiations on Brexit?"

But whether the current government will be the ones handling those Brexit negotiations is far from sure, Thornberry believes. She likens the mood to the dying days of the John Major government, with a tired government clinging to power and 'tearing lumps out of each other'. "The problem for the Tories is that they have talked up people's expectations to such an extent that they going to have a great deal of difficulty bursting all those bubbles.

That's very unfortunate and very reckless," she says. "We don't know how long this government is going to last, whether it will be weeks, months or years. What we have to do is be on election footing all the time and Keir [Starmer] and his team and I and my team have to be ready to go. We have to make sure we have continuing conversations with European friends so they have good understanding of what we want to do and how different we would be."

It's a prospect she relishes, whatever the challenges ahead. "I believe that we are so much better in government than the Tories and that it is better for our country to have a Labour government no matter how difficult the circumstances are," she says.

In the meantime, Labour needs to continue campaigning and 'deepening and developing' its policy offer. What enthused voters, particularly the young, so much, she believes, was the authenticity of Corbyn's Labour. She also points to the shift in the political debate, away from 'triangulation' back to 'what the Labour party is about.'

"What [happened in] the general election is not just that we did really well and got the biggest increase in votes since 1945 which is pretty damn good, but politically I feel we have moved the centre of politics back to where it ought to be," she says.

"We needed to move the centre ground back again – things had moved so far away they just needed to be brought back. I am enthused by this and it does seem to me to be absolutely mainstream Labour politics said with confidence and true belief."

For Labour then, there is all to play for. "We did really well in the general election – we just didn't do well enough and we've got to make sure that next time we do win. As long as we do what we ought to be doing, deepen our policy offer, keep united and make sure that we are campaigning properly in Tory seats and SNP seats up and down the country without fear, knowing there are no no-go areas any more, we'll win." **F**

Kate Murray is the editor of the Fabian Review

**We needed to move
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Shared prosperity

Voters who feel left behind want their concerns to be heard. A more inclusive economy offers a way to reconnect with them, writes *Reema Patel*



Reema Patel is a programme manager at the RSA's Action and Research Centre. She is an independent advisory board member of the international student, academic and professional network Rethinking Economics, which aims to propel a wider debate about the purpose of economics and also chairs the Fabian Society's research & editorial committee

OVER THE LAST year, we have lived through two key moments in British democracy: the EU referendum and the general election. The immediate aftermath of the referendum vote revealed a profoundly divided Britain – divided on the basis of the politics of place as well as by age, ethnicity and income. As analysis at the time suggested – and recent Populus polling has confirmed – many of those who voted for Brexit felt left behind and ignored by politicians. The referendum also revealed divisions that were intersectional; challenging a politics that had for too long assumed a more homogenous society, with relatively simple divides on class and income lines, than was in fact the case.

The second key moment was this year's general election, which delivered a hung parliament, a dramatic increase in turnout from 18 to 24-year-olds and an unexpected increase in vote share for the Labour party after seven years of Conservative-led government. This was no 'status quo' election – the message of 'strong and stable' from the Conservative party was starkly rejected. Both the referendum and the general election were 'change' elections: many voters turned out for both because they wished to reject a narrative of economic and political stability – one which they felt was not working in their interests. There is a shift underway, with NatCen's latest British Social Attitudes Survey reporting that 48 per cent of citizens now support higher tax and spending, up from 32 per cent at the start of austerity in 2010; as well as greater redistribution of income.

If it were not clear before, it is now clear that the way economic and political institutions engage with citizens and respond to their voices needs to change. For too long, policy has sought to do things 'to' people, rather than with them. Recent events demonstrate the need for progressives to turn to the task of forging a strong narrative about economic inclusion and shared prosperity.

Towards an inclusive economy

In *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty*, Daron Acemoğlu and James Robinson argue that political and economic institutions can be inclusive and support a prosperous economy, or extractive and undermine a prosperous economy.

The critical distinction between an extractive and an inclusive economy, Acemoğlu and Robinson argue, is whether economies allow those who are economic and political elites to serve their own interests ('extractive') or whether they create incentives that mean the interests of all must be served ('inclusive'). It is important to stress that this is not necessarily a binary distinction. The value of this insight is not that some economies are 'inclusive' and others are 'extractive' – but rather, that we have a spectrum on which we can place economies. Institutions can seek to become less extractive and more inclusive, and Britain is no exception to this analysis.

In this context, it is vital too to reflect on the Grenfell Tower fire, where 80 people are, at the time of writing, reported to have lost their lives. The image of this burning tower block has fast become emblematic of the systemic failure of the few towards the many. It has underlined the need for much more effective ways for the public to hold politicians and policymakers to account. In a democracy, people must have a voice in shaping policies that tackle social problems. If British society fails to address inequality and poverty, that represents not just a deep economic policy failure, but also a democratic deficit. As it stands, our democracy is not functioning as well as it could be and there must be ways to improve it.

Here, the work of the RSA Citizens' Economic Council, the action and research programme making the case for citizens to influence economic policy, is instructive. As part of our action research, we have spoken to more than 160 citizens from some of the UK's most left-behind and

economically excluded groups. We engaged with young people in schools, with people from a range of ethnic minority backgrounds, with LGBTQI people, with care workers, and with disabled people. We met people in Clacton-on-Sea, which had returned a Ukip MP, and citizens in Oldham, Glasgow, London, Port Talbot and inner-city Birmingham. Despite the considerable differences in views and unique experiences in these different places, people's sense of inequality – in treatment, in ability to influence the system, and in their ability to feel part of the system – was a consistent theme. For those of us grappling with the challenge of how to reconcile the values of a liberal and open society with addressing the concerns of many of those in the 'left-behind' parts of our country, there are some real reasons for hope and optimism – as long as we listen to what is being said. Tackling social and economic inequality head-on offers an opportunity to reconnect with those who have been left behind.

How can we create a more inclusive economy?

To address both democratic and economic exclusion, economic policymaking must change in three important and interlinked ways. First, people must be heard, not just listened to. Second, we must promote a model of active citizenship and human flourishing. Third, we must invest in people and their places.

These three points are interlinked because they are interdependent. To be able to hear what people are really saying, treating their contributions as more than just token input, requires the power and ability to respond to and invest in them. It requires us to understand that they are active citizens and potential agents of change, rather than simply passive recipients of public services. Any concept of active citizenship that is to move beyond rhetoric must itself promote a relationship between state and citizens that is collaborative and based on equality and trust. It must move beyond the inequality of power that often exists between state and citizens. And we have to invest in order to address the material hardship that can otherwise make flourishing, agency and participation impossible to achieve.

1. People must be heard, and not just listened to

"I feel I have no voice in society. I don't have a concept of my voice being heard."

Participant, Coppice Neighbourhood Community Centre, Oldham

Many participants intuitively drew the connection between an economy that excludes and a political system that excludes. For instance, when we asked residents in Port Talbot about the impacts of deindustrialisation on their localities and areas, we heard their realism about how globalisation had affected demand for UK steel; but also a deep-seated frustration about the lack of power they felt they had to influence responses in their local area and hence their hopes for prosperity.

Few had much trust in politics, in the media, in councils or in government to listen to their voices. Many didn't believe that anything they said mattered, or that anyone was really interested in listening to them. On the occasions that they were consulted it was viewed as being tokenistic – a

pat on the head rather than a genuine conversation with respect for their views. The language of 'distance' – of being 'listened to' or being 'asked what they thought' without a sense of being able to influence decision-making – was widespread.

2. We must promote active citizenship and participation

"We work closely with the government, the local authority – we think we can do a better job as we are crowdsourcing ideas from the bottom up, it's all about what the community want and what they are going to support. Here we have the ideas, we have the enthusiastic volunteers, we know how to solve our own problems – we just need the funding to get on with it."

Participant, Ardenglen Housing Association, Glasgow

We spoke with some participants in a local community group REVIVE, who were given a small amount of NHS funding and supported by a local housing association, Ardenglen, to run activities such as gardening, walking and other forms of exercise for older women in one of Glasgow's most deprived areas. When the funding ran out, the group felt they had enough of a stake in the initiative to keep it going – and it continues to this day.

This is a powerful story that illustrates the way in which policy can build the capacity of people to lead change in their social networks and their communities. With the right support, people can have a greater stake in their relationships with other people, in their communities and in the outcomes of the change that they have created. Policymaking, done with people, can generate a 'ripple effect' – ensuring that positive social change can be sustained beyond, and multiplied through, an initial intervention from government, civil society and others.

We found that citizens – including those citizens who experience financial and economic exclusion – demonstrate, benefit from, and value social leadership. Very often, in such circumstances, social leadership is forged from necessity; building more informal social networks and relationships to build resilience. But many also spoke of the untapped potential citizens had to demonstrate social leadership that could have been realised had they access to greater, more targeted support that understood the needs of the community – both financial and non-financial. Political and economic institutions need to understand much better and more profoundly what the right support might be. That requires having processes in place to ask citizens, understand the barriers they face, and understand what investment is required to address those barriers.

3. Investing in people and place – from rhetoric to reality

"The fuse has been taken out of Port Talbot. The town was embedded with the steelworks. Now it's gone, the town has lost its identity."

Participant, Baglan community centre, Port Talbot

Our dialogue with citizens in Port Talbot underlined just how deeply the steelworks and related industry were tied



to the identity and economy of the town. Many participants highlighted how many community, social and support ties had been inextricably linked to the steelworks and started to vanish once the number of jobs began to fall. They connected the decline of the steelworks with a decline not only in their own economic security, but in their own sense of agency and ability to flourish.

The steelworks have been so important precisely because of these benefits they brought to people and place – enabling as many people as possible to benefit from employment opportunities and creating a sense of local pride and identity. The value of institutions such as the steelworks is enhanced when people and place are able to connect to its benefits; and is diminished when places and neighbourhoods are less able to do so. The real challenge for policymakers is not simply to invest and in some cases ‘regenerate’, but to ensure that investment and regeneration has community buy-in, benefiting as many people as possible.

A strong theme across the country was how the decline in community and support services because of spending cuts had affected people’s sense of belonging to a single, cohesive community.

In Oldham, we spoke to a group of minority ethnic citizens from Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani backgrounds, many of whom faced significant language barriers, about their frustrations in accessing education, housing and other social opportunities. Many felt disempowered by the disappearance of local civic support, such as translation services, which could have helped to break down communication barriers across diverse communities, strengthen community cohesion, and improve dialogue between individuals and local public services such as the police, the local authority, the NHS and emergency services.

These kinds of initiatives, promoting better dialogue and understanding, form an important part of investment in people and place. Early years support, education, skills and lifelong learning projects, early action and early

intervention work and investment in community development and capacity building are all crucial in helping people, communities and places connect to the benefits of economic activity.

An economy that includes everyone

As our conversations show, whilst there are high levels of distrust in the political and economic system, this does not translate into apathy. Indeed, citizens revealed an appetite for change and meaningful involvement. Investment that is focused on people and places and that promotes active citizenship and participation – inclusive growth – will go some way towards addressing the disaffection, distrust and disempowerment felt by many of those in the areas and communities seen as left behind. But more is required. A culture of innovation in our democracy is vital. We could open the space for engagement up through piloting innovations such as participatory budgeting, which a World Bank study revealed to be particularly effective in Porto Alegre, Brazil at helping to tackle social and economic exclusion. We could test the widespread use of more deliberative conversations such as citizen juries and the RSA Citizens’ Economic Council. We could also build upon the use and effectiveness of poverty, fairness and democracy commissions across the UK.

But initiatives that allow citizens to wield influence and share power are only one part of the picture. Engagement and participation must also be designed in a practical way that recognises structural inequalities as well as dynamics of power and privilege. They must support the creation of safe spaces that equip marginalised citizens to speak out. Engagement and participation must be adequately resourced to ensure those with lived experience are able to be in the room. We need a democracy in which anyone can speak truth to power, and an economy in which everyone is included. ■

Everybody’s Voices Heard: An Economy That Includes Everyone is available from: www.rsa.org.uk/citizenseconomy

The Schulz factor

Charles Lees assesses the prospects for Europe's oldest social democratic party in the forthcoming election and beyond



Charles Lees is professor of politics in the department of politics, languages, and international studies at the University of Bath

As we approach this September's federal elections, the SPD's prospects of unseating Angela Merkel's grip on the Federal Chancellor's office look increasingly bleak. After an initial surge of enthusiasm at the start of the year for the SPD and its newly installed Chancellor candidate Martin Schulz, Merkel has reasserted herself on the German political scene. Schulz's candidature was intended to add a degree of populist passion to the SPD's electoral offer and counter Merkel's centrist electoral pitch, described by the German political scientist Manfred Schmidt as a strategy of 'asymmetric demobilisation'.

Social democracy under pressure

The global financial crisis of 2007 and 2008 and its aftermath exposed to many the growing and intractable tension between the assumptions that underpin modern democracy and the increasingly decisive and potentially destructive demands of the markets. Social democratic parties were particularly exposed by this failure of democratic control and have been punished by voters across Europe. Voters are clearly angered by the increasingly explicit hollowing out of the democratic process that is indicative of what political economist Wolfgang Streeck has described as the 'delayed crisis of capitalism'. The SPD were no different in this regard.

At the heart of this crisis is the stagnation or even decline of wages as a share of GDP over the last the 40 years and the political response to it. This decline coincided with, and further accelerated a shift away from, the post-war 'tax state', in which buoyant general tax revenues funded the provision of public goods and stimulated demand, to the 'debt state', in which the rising living standards and economic growth that voters had come to expect in the post-war period were more and more funded by public debt. For Streeck, the global financial crisis marked the moment when the 'debt state' ran out of road. Western states spent hand over fist to bail out the financial sector and stabilise the economy; a gesture for which they received no thanks from the markets. And faced with a choice between representing and defending the interests of their citizens and maintaining credibility with the very financial markets they had bailed out, these states chose the latter course of action. Democratic control over the economy was revealed to be a chimera.

The apparently non-negotiable nature of austerity and the willingness of governments and financial institutions to override the wishes of their citizens has been most obvious in the Eurozone countries' and European Central Bank's responses to the Euro-crisis. As governments across Europe capitulated to the markets, a particular loathing developed amongst voters for those parties whose purpose in politics was ostensibly to not capitulate to capitalism but rather harness and modify its dynamism for the benefit of all the people. So throughout Europe voters have punished social democratic parties. In the south of Europe – in Greece where PASOK was eliminated by Syriza or in Spain where the PSOE has been shaken by the rise of Podemos – voters have often transferred their loyalties to more populist or radical competitors on the left. More alarmingly for European social democrats, voters in the northern member states switched in significant numbers to the populist right and far right. As the Dutch social scientist Rene Cuperus observed 'European social democracy faces an existential crisis for one reason: the electorate is of the opinion that social democracy is betraying the good society it once promised and stood for – the good society of equal citizenship, solidarity, social mobility, trust and strong community. The electorate thinks that this good society has been undermined and destroyed by an elitist, pseudo-cosmopolitan concept of the good society, built around neo-liberal globalisation, European unification, permanent welfare state reform, ill-managed mass migration, the rise of individualism and a knowledge-based meritocracy'. The electorate had fallen out of love with social democracy.

Compared to some other countries, Germany's experience of the financial crisis was sharp in severity but relatively short-lived in duration. This may go some way to explain why the SPD has avoided the kind of electoral meltdown suffered by PASOK in Greece or even the PS in France. Nevertheless, over the period since 2007 the party's only realistic chance of government at the federal level has been as a junior partner to the CDU/CSU in a grand coalition: first from 2005 to 2009 and, subsequently, since the 2013 federal election. The last decade has not been an easy one for Europe's oldest social democratic party.

By the winter of 2016–17, with less than a year to go before the federal election, it was clear that the SPD needed

to change course if it was to break the cycle of electoral stagnation in which it appeared to be locked. Monthly polls over the period since October 2013 have seen support for the SPD decline steadily from around 26 per cent after the 2013 federal election to just 21 per cent by January 2017. The party appeared to lack the ability to garner any of the credit for the country's relative economic success and increasingly dominant role in Europe. Indeed, as is often the case with junior coalition partners, the SPD seemed to get disproportionately punished for its participation in government with the CDU/CSU.

To counter this 'junior coalition partner effect', the SPD needed to distance itself from the CDU/CSU. As part of this strategy, the party looked outside the federal government to Martin Schulz, the charismatic president of the European Parliament. Schulz replaced Sigmar Gabriel as SPD Chair and Chancellor candidate in January 2017.

Schulz's arrival in Berlin had an immediate impact on the SPD's fortunes, with popular support rising to 32 per cent by March 2017. However, this surge was short-lived and at no point did the SPD reach the levels of support enjoyed by the CDU. By June 2017, support for the SPD had fallen back to 25 per cent.

The rise and subsequent decline in Schulz's own popularity with the German public was even more pronounced. Schulz benefited from an initial surge of support, opening up an 11-point lead (49 to 38 per cent) over Merkel, before dropping back as the year progressed.

At the start of his candidature, the press and public alike warmed to Schulz's biography: born into modest family circumstances in the Rhineland, leaving school without much in the way of qualifications, descending into alcoholism and attempting suicide before his recovery and rise through municipal politics, on to Brussels, and eventually to Berlin. Schulz was a more populist and demotic figure than the technocratic and relatively right wing Gabriel, whom he replaced, and he immediately created a degree of political distance between the SPD and the CDU/CSU. However, as Chancellor candidate, Schulz has struggled to craft a political narrative that resonated beyond the SPD's electoral core and, as the gilt wore off his candidature, a series of electoral reversals at the State level – including in the SPD's heartland of North Rhine-Westphalia – exposed a certain brittleness and rigidity of approach. This contrasted badly with the obvious gravitas and resilience of the incumbent and, by June 2017, Merkel had opened up a 27 per cent gap over Schulz.

The experience of the last 18 months, including the result of the EU referendum in the UK and the election of Donald Trump in the US presidential election, was a timely reminder to political analysts of the perils of prediction. In our newly chastened state it is tempting to hedge our bets, but I am prepared to stick my neck out a little. I predict that, all things being equal, Merkel will be returned to power as Federal Chancellor after the election. The more intriguing question, therefore, is not whether Merkel is returned to power but rather what kind of government will she lead? The SPD has been junior partner in Merkel's governments for eight of the last 12 years and, with little hope of toppling

Merkel, many senior SPD figures regard a renewal of the grand coalition as their best hope of government.

However there are a number of reasons why this might not, or even *should not*, happen. First, although he is a strong pro-European in the orthodox German mould, Martin Schulz is a more abrasive figure than Sigmar Gabriel and the political distance created with the CDU/CSU during the election campaign will be harder to bridge than it might have been under Schulz's more centrist and emollient predecessors.

Second, Merkel may have a number of potential coalition partners, possibly including the Greens and certainly the newly resurgent liberal FDP, which the CDU/CSU has considered its default option in the past.

Which brings us to the third reason: the increasing unpopularity of the grand coalition option with the German public. Polling shows that for most of period from January 2014 to June 2017, the incumbent grand coalition was by far the most popular coalition option with German voters.

However, as 2017 has progressed, voters have grown increasingly unhappy with it and open to other options, particularly a return to the CDU/CSU-FDP coalition option.

The fourth reason is that it might not be in the best interests of the SPD to return to government as a junior partner of the CDU/CSU. I have already discussed the 'junior partner effect', in which junior partners tend to absorb the negative costs of coalition govern-

ment (think of the plight of the Liberal Democrats in the UK). The longer a party stays in government under those circumstances, the more costly it can become.

This brings us to the final reason for resisting the siren call of government – the opportunity for using a period in opposition for a root and branch renewal of the SPD's mission and electoral offer to the German public. The choice of Schulz over Gabriel was recognition that the SPD's hitherto centrist and technocratic message no longer resonated with German voters. At the same time, Schulz does not represent a real break with the past – he is very much a creature of the European political establishment, albeit with populist overtones, and offers little change from the political-economic status quo beyond a stronger focus on social justice. Yet the lesson of Jeremy Corbyn's Labour party in the UK is that it is possible to break with the neo-liberal consensus and craft a positive offer that has considerable electoral appeal. It is true that the social and political conditions in Germany are very different from those of the UK, which is undergoing something analogous to a social and political breakdown. This means that the SPD cannot simply view the Corbyn playbook as an off-the-peg solution to its electoral problems.

What the Corbyn example does demonstrate, however, is that it is possible to break the cycle of electoral decline that has affected social democratic parties. If there was the political will within the party elite and across the membership, four years in opposition would give the SPD the opportunity to craft a uniquely German response to the crisis of European social democracy and make themselves truly relevant again for the first time in 20 years. ■

The Corbyn example demonstrates it is possible to break the cycle of electoral decline that has affected social democratic parties

The little tramp of the left

Charlie Chaplin was not only a comic genius but a citizen of the world and progressive campaigner. And his political story has surprising resonances today, as *Richard Carr* explains



Dr Richard Carr is senior lecturer in history and politics at Anglia Ruskin university

FOR MUCH OF the interwar period the left was awash with ideas, but often far from actual power. Barring two short-lived Labour administrations, Britain was presided over by Conservative-dominated governments for the entirety of the period that separated the world wars. Abroad, infamously, much of continental Europe tilted far more to the right than this – with horrific consequences. And across the Atlantic, the Republican party held the White House, Senate and House of Representatives from 1921 until the advent of the Roosevelt era. Even after the steady advances seen for Labour at the June 2017 general election, this pattern is not exactly unfamiliar to modern audiences.

One major witness to this period of crisis was the director and actor Charlie Chaplin. The South London-born comedian made a series of films with a political tinge, and, to much acclaim, played an impoverished tramp at the margins of free market America. But Chaplin's interest in the world around him was expressed far beyond world-class films such as *City Lights* or *Modern Times*.

This was readily understood at the time. Indeed, Winston Churchill once remarked to Charlie Chaplin that he would make a 'good Labour MP,' whilst future Labour party chair Harold Laski and its leader George Lansbury both declared Chaplin to be a socialist. There was much evidence for this. After all, the Hollywood star had hobnobbed with Ramsay MacDonald at Chequers in the 1930s, and, 20 years later, returned to the UK in the 1950s to make a speech praising Britain's new National Health Service. Throughout his life Chaplin had much in common with the British left, and often popped up to make pointed progressive interventions – including, in the US, campaigning for candidates such as Upton Sinclair and Henry Wallace (both close to constituting the Bernie Sanders of their day). Whether it be attempting to enlist the future minister John Strachey to write a script for one of his movies, or chatting with Jennie Lee in the House of Commons, Charlie Chaplin was both generally sympathetic to Labour and someone who liked to surround himself with progressive thinkers.

Chaplin was a leftwing contrarian who liked an argument

Yet Chaplin was not just a left leaning 'luvvie', but someone who sat down and thought about capitalism, the problems it created, and how to solve them. In policy terms, he was an early Jeremy Corbyn and would have fitted well on Corbyn and John McDonnell's Economic Advisory Committee. For instance, Chaplin urged British and American governments to nationalise the postal and railway services after they had been privatised in the post-first world war period. He backed a form of 'people's quantitative easing' to be used to cancel war debt, boost wages, and invest in infrastructure. And through discussions with John Maynard Keynes in the wake of the Wall Street Crash, he supported the model of counter-cyclical public investment that the Cambridge economist would become famous for. Chaplin even advocated for higher levels of taxation, particularly on income, albeit all the while being an inveterate tax avoider who was forced to repay \$1m in back taxes (about \$14m today) under the threat of jail.

This progressive economic agenda led many on the American right to dub Chaplin a communist sympathiser – not quite 'the man who hated Britain,' but certainly an 'un-American.' More accurately, he was a leftwing contrarian who liked an argument and wouldn't back down easily. On the positive side of the ledger, he supported Gandhi's non-violent resistance policies in India – against the views of his friend Winston Churchill. In terms of the negative, his 1942 praise for Stalin's purges and concurrent claim that his response to a Communist takeover of the world would be 'so what?' was clearly mad optics, but were not really representative of Chaplin's generally more nuanced views.

In any event, Chaplin's life story simply did not stack up with a blanket anti-capitalist agenda. After all, Chaplin was a man who had come from nothing. He spent a month of his childhood in a Victorian workhouse, and was often separated from a mother who spent years in various institutions for the mentally unstable. There was no father to pick up the slack – Charles Chaplin Snr having drunk himself to death at the age of 37. And yet from this disadvantaged background Chaplin rose to become a pioneer in



© Flickr/Jim Forest

a particular art form, and made tens of millions of dollars whilst doing so. He was an advert for capitalism – not its antithesis.

It is however his relationship with fascism that most defines him, and despite going on to make the Hitler-bashing film *The Great Dictator*, there were always two sides to this coin. The difficulty for Chaplin, like many on the Anglo-American left, was that for all their obvious faults fascist regimes had seemed to conquer that most tricky of interwar foes – mass unemployment. In 1928 Chaplin wrote that Benito Mussolini was one of his ‘men of the year’ because ‘he has taken a great nation and put it to work.’ Three years later, promoting his masterpiece *City Lights*, Chaplin visited fascist Italy and claimed that he was ‘impressed with its atmosphere...hope and desire seemed in the air.’ And when meeting Oswald Mosley in 1931 – after Mosley’s resignation from the Labour government and a year away from launching the British Union of Fascists – Chaplin found that their brands of economic intervention had much in common. He later wrote that the future fascist was ‘one of the most promising young men in English politics.’

Adolf Hitler was certainly a game-changer however. Although not Jewish himself, both Chaplin’s half-brother and 1930s partner Paulette Goddard had Jewish fathers. The Nazi press regularly printed (false) accusations that Chaplin was a ‘Jewish tumbler’ and his films were promptly banned under the Third Reich. More generally, as a self-proclaimed ‘citizen of the world’ – decades before Theresa May denounced the concept – Chaplin never understood nationalism even in its diluted democratic forms. He never became an American citizen (which allowed for his de-facto expulsion from the country in 1952) and only maintained a British passport as a matter of necessity. As such, a regime built on blood, race and soil was always inexplicable to him.

The question was, however, what should he do about it? This was not easy for many on the left. Under Clement Attlee’s leadership the Labour party moved to a more muscular foreign policy than that of pacifist George Lansbury, but the 1935 Tory landslide meant Stanley Baldwin and then Neville Chamberlain held the keys to Downing Street.

In the US Roosevelt may have been in the White House, but the passage of successive Neutrality Acts had moved that country further towards isolationism. To his eternal credit, Chaplin swam against this prevailing tide. One of the startling new findings of my biography – based on newly unearthed sources from the National Archives – is the degree to which officialdom sought to stop Chaplin making *The Great Dictator*. Yet when Chamberlain’s government ordered the British Consulate in California to try and dissuade Chaplin from making the film, and warned him they would lean on the British film censors to ban it even if it was made, Chaplin ploughed ahead anyway. This was a big financial risk, and a brave measure to take. Clement Attlee and Charlie Chaplin thereby formed two sides of a pincer movement the British left exerted on the pro-appeasement forces then gripping the western world. In this regard, morality trumped pragmatism.

Events eventually moved Chaplin’s way and, in this sense again, he was rather like Jeremy Corbyn. Personally, for all its significance, I am not totally convinced June 2017 re-writes all the old electoral rules. Gordon Brown’s 2010 seats on Michael Howard’s 2005 gains is not an administration on its own. But Chaplin, like Corbyn, understood the power of ideas (work, freedom, dignity) and of advocating for big concepts. Labour has always been at its best when it articulates a bold message fluently. It is sometimes forgotten that New Labour won in 1997 on a platform of restoring our public services after years of under investment. This is largely Corbyn’s position too. But just as Chaplin didn’t have to win any elections, nor has Jeremy Corbyn yet done so. Chaplin was terrible at reaching out to centrist Democrats and generally ploughed his own ideological path – to his own later cost. Partly through his own actions, and partly through others, Corbyn has mirrored this model. But if, like the end of Chaplin’s *City Lights*, we go on to see a heartfelt reunion of the estranged protagonists – then all may yet be possible. ■

Charlie Chaplin: A Political Biography from Victorian Britain to Modern America by Richard Carr is published by Routledge

Books

A whistleblower's tale

The story of the Greek crisis as recounted by Yanis Varoufakis represents the triumph of brute force, writes *Vassilis Fouskas*



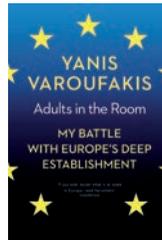
Vassilis K Fouskas is professor of international politics and economics at Royal Docks School of Business & Law, University of East London, and co-author of Greece, Financialization and the EU. The Political Economy of Debt and Destruction

Yanis Varoufakis, a British-trained economist who taught for many years in Australia, Britain and Greece, was Greece's finance minister for 162 days during Syriza's first few months in office in 2015. His duties were anything but ordinary. With his country effectively bankrupt, Varoufakis's mission was almost exclusively to negotiate with the creditors, the troika of the EU, IMF and the ECB. His aim was to achieve a form of debt relief and a sustainable way out of the crisis, even if he had to accept austerity. This account is his personal testimony of the negotiations with the troika and the Eurogroup, something which is very significant given that no minutes of the negotiating meetings in the first six months of 2015 were kept. It's a whistleblower's tale, not least because he wants to defend himself against a possible legal case in Greece, where some are accusing him, among others, of "closing the Greek banks and drowning Greece deeper into its debt trap."

Varoufakis argues that he made a "pact of steel" with the Syriza leadership before he left his professorial post at the University of Texas to become officially involved with the new Syriza government-in-waiting. Syriza, Varoufakis maintains, accepted his plan and negotiating tactics with the troika, which included guarantees for substantial debt relief and a certain acceptance of austerity as long as the country's rate of growth was higher than the interest rate for borrowing for the year to come. Should the creditors not budge, Varoufakis tells us, he was given the go ahead by Alexis Tsipras, Syriza's leader and Greece's PM since January 2015, to work out a contingency plan.

The first leg of this contingency plan involved the European Central Bank's remaining Greek debt, the SMP (securities market programme) bonds amounting to 29bn euros. A threat on the part of the Syriza government to reduce the value of these bonds unilaterally would have been a key deterrent against the ECB closing the Greek banks if the negotiations failed. The second leg of the contingency plan was a "parallel payments system". If the ECB closed the Greek banks, then the Syriza government would have activated a parallel banking system to be set up using taxpayers' identification numbers.

Varoufakis narrates how members of the troika, especially the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, isolated him from Syriza's leadership and, especially, from Tsipras and explains how some within the government and the party pushed for his marginalisation and eventual replace-



Adults in the Room
My Battle with Europe's Deep Establishment, by Yanis Varoufakis.
Bodley Head
£20

ment. Thus, his debt relief idea and negotiating plan were undermined from both within and outside his government. The fascinating narrative apart, Varoufakis makes some very interesting observations. When he sought the tax code numbers in his ministry that he needed to implement his contingency plan, he realised that they were controlled by the troika's personnel in Greece. This surely shows the degree of ordoliberal-imperial integration which the EU, under the leadership of Germany, has achieved.

Ordoliberalism – the German/Austrian brand of neo-liberalism badged as a "social market economy" – is a rule-based form of a strong public institutional policy that defines market freedom through monetary discipline. Once the rules are set they cannot be bent by democratic politics, negotiation or social struggle. The Greek referendum of 5 July 2015 meant nothing to Germany's finance minister, Wolfgang Schäuble. In the ordoliberal world, economic affairs are to be depoliticised and reduced to purely technical norms and processes. In effect, in that famous phrase, there is no alternative.

Varoufakis's account, as well as his previous work on globalisation and the EU, seem to downplay this important aspect of German and European politics and the way they relate to the declining position of the IMF (and the USA) in European and global affairs. Reading between the lines, he seems to have over-estimated the influence of the IMF on Germany. The IMF's position on the issue of debt was – and remains – that Greece needs substantial debt relief to make any austerity programme viable. Varoufakis, effectively, was adopting the IMF line but Germany and its staunch allies in Greece inside and outside Syriza won.

The closest Varoufakis gets to broaching this confrontation with ordoliberalism is when he describes a dinner occasion in his flat with a "troika" emissary, "without a missive", as he puts it. Towards the end, one of his Greek co-diners asks the emissary, Thomas Wieser, if he is any relation to the right-wing Austrian finance minister, Friedrich von Wieser, whose thinking had shaped the minds of libertarians, such as Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich von Hayek. Thomas's answer is in the positive. Weeks later, when Varoufakis experienced once more the troika's brutal force, he happened to recall one of von Wieser's most memorable lines: "Freedom has to be superseded by a system of order". This is where we are at in Greece and Europe. But do not call it *democracy*. **F**

Lost in translation

Canada's prime minister has won plaudits across the world – but does his story hold lessons for progressives here? *Tara Paterson* takes a look



Tara Paterson is a researcher at the Fabian Society. She is from Canada and is a member of Canada's New Democratic Party – the social democratic party that sits to the left of the centrist Liberal Party

Throughout an eventful 2016, Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau was progressives' most convincing piece of evidence that liberal internationalism wasn't dead yet. The UK opted to march out of the European Union. Americans handed Trump a mandate to build a border wall. And for a while it looked as though far-right anti-immigrant leaders might clinch victory in France and Austria.

The Canadian leader, meanwhile, polished his reputation as a poster boy for social progress. Within weeks of taking office in November 2015, he had garnered international media attention for greeting Syrian refugees at the Toronto airport and for appointing a gender-balanced cabinet. Though certainly scripted and stage managed, his outward-looking progressivism wasn't all for show either. He has continued Canada's decades-long practice of admitting more than 300,000 immigrants per year, nearly one per cent of the overall population – a greater proportion than any other comparable nation, including Britain. Rightly or wrongly, Trudeau's success was taken by many on the left as proof that right-wing populism could be defeated. If Canada is any indication, then mass immigration and a declining manufacturing industry are not inevitable precursors to closed-off anti-internationalist sentiment.

Canada's bucking of 2016's political trends and Trudeau's global celebrity status might attract international audiences to his recently re-released memoir, *Common Ground: A Political Life*. First published in 2014 after he won the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada, the book reads as a coming-of-age story for both a country still in relative youth and its reluctant but somewhat inevitable leader. The 2017 version includes an opening reflective chapter about the Canadian election and his first 11 months as Prime Minister.

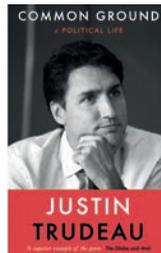
As the eldest son of one of Canada's most controversial but beloved prime ministers, Trudeau details his unconventional childhood growing up in 24 Sussex Drive (Canada's version of 10 Downing Street). Anecdotes about meeting world leaders and running away from his security detail are entertaining even if they feel somewhat contrived. Chapters on his private education in Montreal and his undergraduate experience at McGill University offer insights into the way that Québec's linguistic politics manifest personally. Even though Trudeau is fluently bilingual, he is bullied at his French school for speaking unaccented English. Some of his francophone classmates

believe that the fact that Trudeau's English is as good as his French means he is not a real Quebecker.

Common Ground also describes Trudeau's experimental and somewhat directionless 20s, including a year-long trip around the world before stints as a ski instructor and then a teacher. Throughout it all he takes great pains to dispel his reputation as a silver-spooned dynast. Discussions about the difficulty of his parents' infamous divorce and his mother's struggles with bipolar disorder are genuine and touching.

But his story is peppered with predictable and not entirely convincing platitudes about hard work and the need to root out entitlement. By the time Trudeau arrives at his decision to enter politics – an outcome that virtually the whole country had been anticipating since he delivered an eloquent and heart-breaking eulogy on national television at his father's funeral in 2000 – his claims that he was somehow the underdog in his constituency selection race are almost laughable. He won 55 per cent of the vote against two local candidates. When he ran for leader of the Liberal Party after one term as MP he captured nearly 80 per cent of the vote against five candidates. Trudeau is charismatic and has clearly brought the Liberal Party much success. But that leadership race was a coronation, not a contest.

Common Ground's narrative is compelling and readable – much aided no doubt by the team of Canadian journalists who have admitted to helping craft it. But Trudeau offers few insights about why an open, internationalist message resonated in Canada when it seemingly floundered everywhere else. His only explanation for Canada's openness, which he returns to frequently, is an unsatisfying appeal to an apparently inherent and unique Canadian character. He writes: "Diversity is core to who we are, to what makes us a successful country... It has made Canada the freest, and best, place in the world to live." That may do much to warm the hearts of liberally-minded Canadians like myself but it does little by way of offering a path for other nations to emulate. Embedding multiculturalism as a core national value is a decades long project for which Trudeau fails to offer a blueprint. Britons interested in learning about the personal life and philosophy of one of the world's most popular politicians will find much to enjoy in Trudeau's *Common Ground*. Those looking for translatable political lessons, however, are advised to keep looking. ■



**Common
Ground:
A Political
Life**
Justin Trudeau,
Oneworld,
£16.99

Campaigning with a conscience

An early Fabian and health campaigner has left a lasting legacy in the town she made her home, as *Maurice Austin* explains

Colchester has a radical history. It was here that the Peasants' Revolt in 1381 was fostered and much of the intellectual support for that rebellion was provided by local priest John Ball, who preached in the town centre. He was an early proponent of the concept of equality and would surely have been at home in the present day Colchester Fabians.

The life of a more recent radical, Dr Ruth Bensusan-Butt, has been commemorated in a new publication by Colchester Fabians which shines a light on the life

and work of this respected GP, expert in anaesthetics, pioneer in child care and early Fabian.

Born in 1877 in south London, Bensusan-Butt decided she would become a medical doctor and, although this was still rare for a woman, she was determined that she would not let prejudice get in the way of her ambition. She used her family's connections on the continent and obtained a place at Milan university, training too at the Royal Free hospital in London.

Later, Bensusan-Butt became passionately involved in the political campaigns of the day. She attended early Fabian meetings with Beatrice and Sidney Webb, distributed leaflets and campaigned, particularly on health and welfare related issues. As her memoirs relate, it was at a Fabian summer school in North Wales in 1909 that she met another young doctor, who became her husband.

"We went afterwards to London and took part in the suffrage movement," she wrote. "We sold 'Votes for Women', walked in processions and we went to meetings in Hyde Park." At a memorable suffrage march to the Albert Hall, she recalled, the organiser shouted "All men behind" so 'husbands and sympathisers' walked in a group in the wake of the women demonstrators.

She was instrumental in the creation of the town's first maternity hospital

She was proud of her contribution to the Fabians too, writing: "One of the meetings we went to was in aid of the Webbs' minority reform. I sold the report (on the poor law) and sold more than anyone else."

Bensusan-Butt spent time working across England, Wales and Ireland before the move

to Colchester, where she lived and worked for more than 40 years, and where she was instrumental in the creation of the town's first maternity hospital as well as a day nursery and antenatal classes. She was also a leading light in the Socialist Medical Association (now the Socialist Health Association), playing a role in their lobbying in the 1930s and 1940s for the establishment of a state medical service. She was also a Colchester borough councillor, winning a reputation in the town, so the Colchester Civic Society says, for being a prolific campaigner, with a huge social conscience. **F**

Maurice Austin is secretary of Colchester Fabian Society

Early Fabian, Women's Suffragist, Much-loved Colchester GP: A tribute to Dr Ruth Bensusan-Butt is available from Maurice Austin, Tindal Lodge, 11 Valletta Close, Chelmsford CM1 2PT. Suggested donation £3.

Noticeboard

Fabian Society executive elections: Call for nominations

Nominations are now invited for:

- 10 executive committee places
- 3 local society places
- Honorary treasurer
- Welsh convenor

Elections will be by postal ballot and electronic ballot of all full national members and local society members. Nominations should be in writing and individuals can nominate themselves. Local society nominations should be made by local societies.

At least two of the 10 national members and one of the three local society members elected must be under the age of 31 at the AGM on Saturday 18 November 2017. There will be no more

than five places for Westminster parliamentarians.

Nominees should submit a statement in support of their nomination, including information about themselves, of not more than 70 words.

Nominations should be sent to: Fabian Society elections, 61 Petty France, London SW1H 9EU or emailed to giles.wright@fabians.org.uk

Please write the position nominated for at the top of the envelope or in the subject line of the email.

The closing date for nominations is Friday 11 August 2017.

Members of the society before 17 July 2017 are eligible to stand and vote in the executive committee elections.

Young Fabian and Fabian's Women's Network elections

Nominations are also open for the annual election to the Young Fabian executive, open to any member under the age of 31 on 18 November 2017. In order to be nominated for the executive, candidates must have joined before 13 May 2017. For full details see www.youngfabians.org.uk

The Fabian Women's Network is also seeking nominations for its executive committee. For details and information about how to get involved, please visit www.fabian-women.co.uk

The deadline for nominations for both committees is Friday 11 August.

AGM

The AGM will take place on Saturday 18 November 2017. Any full member, national or local, may submit a resolution by 11 August. Resolutions will be submitted in the autumn issue of the Fabian Review and amendments will be invited, to be submitted five weeks before the AGM. Contact Giles Wright for more information on 0207 227 4904 or giles.wright@fabians.org.uk

Fabian Fortune Fund

Winner: CT Boam, £100

Half the income from the Fabian Fortune Fund goes to support our research programme.

Forms and further information from Giles Wright, giles.wright@fabians.org.uk

Listings

BIRMINGHAM & WEST MIDLANDS

For details and information, please contact Luke John Davies at bhamfabians@gmail.com

BOURNEMOUTH & DISTRICT

24 November. Clare Moody MEP. 'Brexit Update'. The society celebrates its 125th anniversary in 2017 with activities and meetings. Contact Ian for details Meetings at The Friends Meeting House, Wharnclyffe Rd, Boscombe, Bournemouth at 7.30pm. Contact Ian Taylor on 01202 396634 for details or taylorbournemouth@gmail.com

BRIGHTON & HOVE

14 July. Christian Wolmar and Jeff Slee on 'The Railway. Crisis or Calm?' All meetings at 8pm at the Friends Meeting House, Ship St, Brighton. Please use Meeting House Lane entrance. Details of all meetings from Ralph Bayley: ralphbayley@gmail.com

BRISTOL

Regular meetings. Contact Ges Rosenberg for details on grosenberg@churchside.me.uk or Arthur Massey 0117 969 3608 arthur.massey@btinternet.com

CARDIFF

Society reforming. Please contact Jonathan Evans at wynneevans@phonecoop.coop if you're interested

CENTRAL LONDON

Fabian Society office, 61, Petty France, SW1H 9 EU. Details from Giles Wright on 0207 227 4904 or giles.wright@fabians.org.uk

CHISWICK & WEST LONDON

All meetings at 8pm in Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall Details from the secretary, Alison Baker at a.m.baker@blueyonder.co.uk

COLCHESTER

7pm for 7.30pm, Hexagonal Room, Quaker Meeting House, 6 Church St, Colchester. Details of meetings from Maurice Austin – maurice.austin@phonecoop.coop

COUNTY DURHAM

Six Saturday meetings per year at the Lionmouth Rural Centre, near Esh Winning, DH7 9QE, Saturday 12.15pm – 2pm £3 including soup and rolls. Annual local membership is £8 for waged, £4 for unwaged No need to say you're coming. Membership not needed at first visit. Details from the secretary, Professor

Alan Townsend, 62A Low Willington, Crook, Durham DL15 0BG, 01388 746479, Alan.Townsend@dur.ac.uk

CROYDON AND SUTTON

New society with regular meetings. Contact Emily Brothers on emily.brothers@btinternet.com

CUMBRIA & NORTH LANCASHIRE

Meetings, 6.30pm for 7pm at Castle Green Hotel, Kendal. For information contact Robin Cope at robincope@waitrose.com

DARTFORD & GRAVESHAM

Regular meetings at 8pm in Dartford Working Men's Club, Essex Rd, Dartford. Details from Deborah Stoate on 0207 227 4904 email debstoate@hotmail.com

DERBY

Details for meetings from Alan Jones on 01283 217140 or alan.mandh@btinternet.com

DONCASTER & DISTRICT

New society forming, for details and information contact Kevin Rodgers on 07962 019168 email k.t.rodgers@gmail.com

EAST LOTHIAN

7.30pm in the Buffet Room, the Town House, Haddington Details of all meetings from Noel Foy on 01620 824386 email noelfoy@lewisk3.plus.com

FINCHLEY

25 September: Heather and Dave Wetzel on land valuation tax 30 November: Professor Floya Anthias, 'Has identity replaced class in politics?' All meetings at the Blue Beetle, 28 Hendon Lane N3 1TS Enquiries to Mike Walsh on 07980 602122 mike.walsh44@ntlworld.com

GLASGOW

Now holding regular meetings. Contact Martin Hutchinson on mail@liathach.net

GLOUCESTER

Regular meetings at TGWU, 1 Pullman Court, Great Western Rd, Gloucester. Details from Malcolm Perry at malcolmperry3@btinternet.com

GRIMSBY

Regular meetings. Details from Pat Holland – hollandpat@hotmail.com

HARROW

Details from Gillian Travers at gillian.travers@hotmail.com Fabians from other areas where there are no local Fabian societies are very welcome to join us.

HASTINGS & RYE

Meetings held on last Friday of each month. Please contact Valerie Threadgill at val.threadgill@gmail.com

HAVINGER

Details of all meetings from David Marshall email david.c.marshall@talk21.Tel 01708 441189 For the latest information, see the website havingerfabians.org.uk

ISLINGTON

Details of all meetings from Adeline Au, email sewiyn.au@gmail.com

IPSWICH

Details of all meetings from John Cook: contact@ipswich-labour.org.uk twitter.com/suffolklabians

MANCHESTER

Please contact the secretary David Meller at david.meller@me.com

MERSEYSIDE

Please contact James Roberts at jamesroberts1986@gmail.com

NEWHAM

Please contact Rohit Dasgupta at rhit_svu@hotmail.com

NORTHUMBRIA AREA

For details and booking contact Pat Hobson: pat.hobson@hotmail.com

NORTH EAST LONDON

Contact Nathan Ashley @ nathanashley88@gmail.com

NORFOLK

New society forming. Contact Stephen McNair for details. stephen.mcnaire@btinternet.com

OXFORD

Please contact Michael Weatherburn at admin@oxfordfabians.org.uk

PETERBOROUGH

Meetings at 8pm at the Ramada Hotel, Thorpe Meadows, Peterborough. Details from Brian Keegan on 01733 265769, email brian@briankeegan.demon.co.uk New members very welcome. Meeting at 7.30pm at The Havelock Community Centre, Fawcett Rd, Southsea PO4 0LQ. For details, contact Nita Cary at dewicary@yahoo.co.uk

READING & DISTRICT

For details of all meetings, contact Tony Skuse at tony@skuse.net

SHEFFIELD

Regular meetings on the 3rd Thursday of the month at The Quaker Meeting House, 10, St James St, Sheffield.S1 2EW Details and information from Rob Murray

on 0114 255 8341 or email robertljmurray@hotmail.com

SOUTH WEST LONDON

Contact Tony Eades on 0208487 9807 or tonyeades@hotmail.com

SOUTHEND ON SEA

New society forming. Contact John Hodgkins on 01702 334916

SOUTHAMPTON AREA

For details of venues and all meetings, contact Eliot Horn at eliot.horn@btinternet.com

SOUTH TYNESIDE

Contact Paul Freeman on 0191 5367 633 or at freemanpsmb@blueyonder.co.uk

SUFFOLK

Details from John Cook – ipswichlabour@gmail.com, www.twitter.cdom/suffolklabians

SURREY

Regular meetings. Details from Warren Weertman at secretary@surreyfabians.org

THANET

New society with regular meetings. Contact Will Scobie at info@thanetfabians.org.uk Website for details www.thanetfabians.org.uk

TONBRIDGE & TUNBRIDGE WELLS

Contact Martin Clay at martin.clay@btconnect.com or lorna.blackmore@btinternet.com

TOWER HAMLETS

Regular meetings. Contact: Chris Weavers – 07958 314846 E-mail – towerhamletsfabiansociety@googlemail.com

TYNEMOUTH

Monthly supper meetings, details from Brian Flood on 0191 258 3949

YORK

Regular meetings on 3rd or 4th Friday at 7.4pm at Jacob's Well, Off Micklegate, York. Details from Cynthia Collier at mike.collier@talktalk.net

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Oxford regional conference
Saturday 25 November
– all day, at Quaker Meeting House, St Giles, Oxford. Further details from Michael Weatherburn at admin@oxfordfabians.org.uk

FABIAN QUIZ

INHERITORS OF THE EARTH: HOW NATURE IS THRIVING IN AN AGE OF EXTINCTION

Chris D Thomas



It is accepted wisdom today that human beings have irrevocably damaged the natural world. Yet what if this narrative obscures a more hopeful truth?

In *Inheritors of the Earth*, renowned ecologist and environmentalist Chris Thomas overturns the accepted story, revealing how nature is fighting back.

Many animals and plants actually benefit from our presence, raising biological diversity in most parts of the world and increasing the rate at which new species are formed, perhaps to the highest level in Earth's history. From Costa Rican tropical forests to the thoroughly transformed British landscape, nature is coping surprisingly well in the human epoch.

Chris Thomas takes us on a gripping round-the-world journey to meet the enterprising creatures that are thriving in the Anthropocene age, from York's ochre-coloured comma butterfly to hybrid bison in North America, scarlet-beaked pukekos in New Zealand, and Asian palms forming thickets in the European Alps. In so doing, he questions our irrational persecution of so-called 'invasive species', and shows us that we should not treat the Earth as a faded masterpiece that we need to restore.

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

Name three animals in the UK which are facing extinction.

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

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

ANSWERS MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN FRIDAY 11 AUGUST 2017





Visit our website for some great campaign ideas and resources: www.usdaw.org.uk/campaigns

To join Usdaw visit: www.usdaw.org.uk
or call: **0800 030 80 30**

General Secretary: John Hannett
President: Jeff Broome
Usdaw 188 Wilmslow Road,
Manchester M14 6LJ



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*Union of Shop, Distributive
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