FABIAN REVIEW

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REACHING OUT

New ideas to renew the centre-left from Liz Kendall, Daniel Sleat, Matthew Laza, Anthony Painter, Polly Mackenzie and more **p10** */ Lisa Nandy on healing the UK's divisions* **p20** */ Nick Dearden calls for a truly left-wing trade policy* **p23** */ Emma Dent Coad debunks the myth of choice* **p26**

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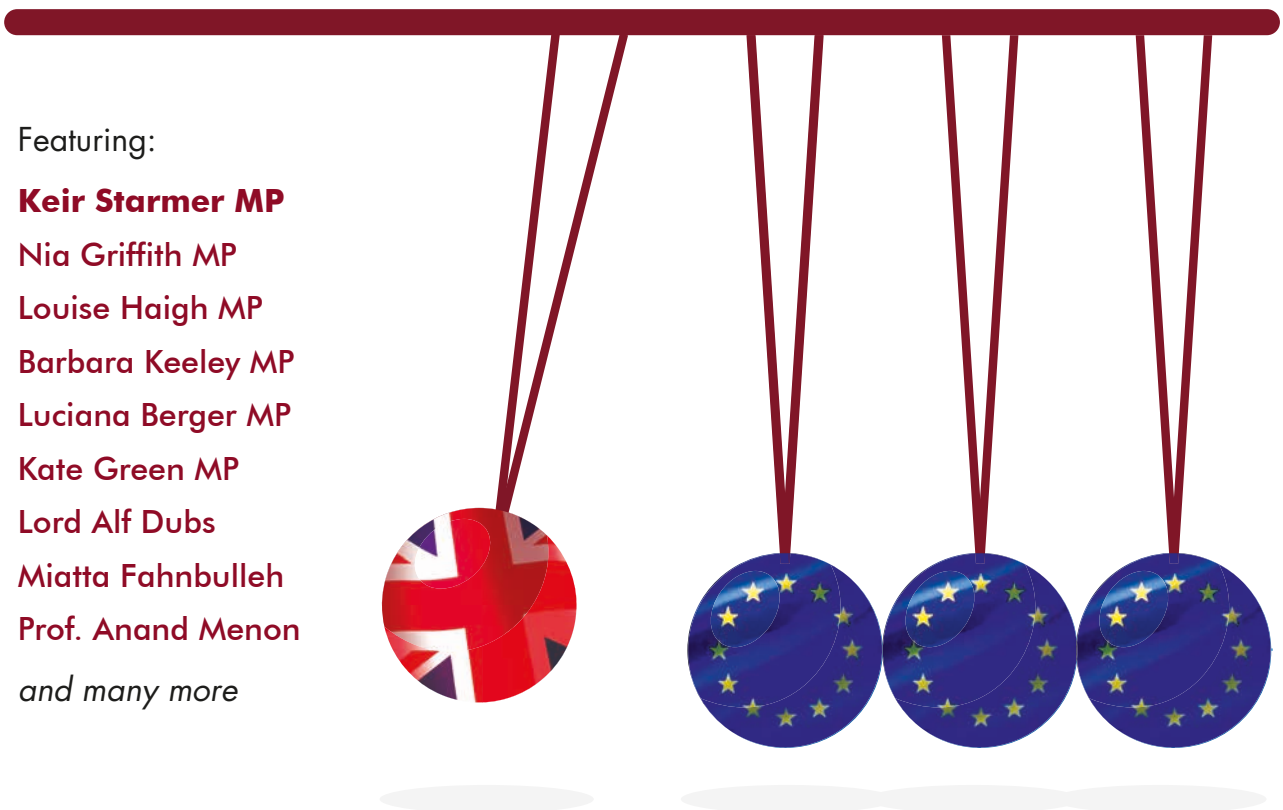

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FABIAN SOCIETY

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Bridging the divides

The centre-left's renewal is starting – and that can only be good news. For when both sides of Labour's broad church contribute ideas, Labour and the country will be better for it, argues *Andrew Harrop*

Labour's Brexit debate has exposed tensions and cleavages within the party that have nothing to do with left versus right. Among centrist social democrats there are proponents of both globalist liberalism and working-class cultural conservatism.

And on the Corbynite left there is striking disagreement between Momentum's green internationalists and the Bennite 'lexiteers' who seek sovereignty for socialism at home. One of the most important developments of 2018 has been the emergence of significant diversity and disagreement within the Labour left, on both ideological worldviews and political practicalities.

In terms of ideas, Corbynism is a badge for a broad spectrum of thinking. Some of the Labour left's priorities have hardly changed since the 1980s – fighting cuts, extending free services, nationalising industries. But there is genuine innovation too, especially when it comes to economic thinking.

To date the moderate centre left has struggled to respond to the intellectual challenge from the Corbynites. Sometimes when defending the orthodoxies of the last Labour government, social democrats have sounded stuck in the past themselves. But there are signs that the centre left's renewal is slowly starting.

Self-styled moderates are proposing radical and politically contentious reforms to challenge our gross inequalities of wealth and power. They want to reduce the UK's huge wealth disparities through new taxes and market interventions: even Tony Blair now backs a land value tax. They seek to place agency and control into people's hands by reducing concentrations of power within public services, workplaces and consumer markets. And they are searching for practical ways to achieve balanced growth and to secure good work, in a way that embraces new technology and delivers shared prosperity across Britain.

In all of this the moderates are not so moderate: political voices on opposite wings of the labour movement agree on much more than they admit. To add to the story, there are lots of ideas which unite people divided by the tribal left-right split, but which do not command consensus within each rival camp.

The proposal for a universal basic income is a case in point. But, more broadly, both extremes of the movement are home to statist and anti-statist tendencies: radical plans for decentralisation, mutualism and grassroots democracy have a home in centre left as well as Corbynite thinking.

Across the Labour family, people are trying to answer the same questions – and often coming up with the same answers – even though they may be reluctant to acknowledge it is a shared conversation, because of the party's factional fissures.

This is not to underplay the distinctions between Labour's left and right. There is a different tone and mode of politics, with the moderates more likely to champion change from within and more preoccupied with winning a hearing from voters who don't share the left's convictions. And when it comes to economics, moderates don't share the Labour left's heady dreams of post-capitalism; instead they want a steady, practical journey to a more productive, egalitarian variety of capitalism.

But it is often the rhetoric more than the policy that marks the two ends of the axis apart. Indeed, on some questions traditional social democrats appear more radical than the Corbynites. On equality, MPs have attacked Labour's leadership from the left and pointed out that the party's social security, tax and higher education policies do too little to close the gap between rich and poor.

In the years to come the centre left will have a key role to play in demanding intellectual honesty within the Labour family and calling out the leadership where there are gaps in the party's thinking. That might mean demanding rigour on the tax policies required to fund a Scandinavian welfare state; or getting beneath sloganeering to the sort of real-world curiosity and nuance needed to reform failing markets, workplaces and public services.

This all adds to the case for the British left remaining one movement not two. The Labour party should be a broad church not just because it is an electoral necessity; but because, when there are more voices sharing in the conversation, all sides benefit and stronger ideas emerge. A labour movement that offers a comfortable home for Liz Kendall as well as John McDonnell is one that will shape a brighter future for our troubled country. **F**

Shortcuts

NORTHERN PROMISE

The north needs a fairer share of transport investment, and more power to spend it as it sees fit —*Diana Johnson MP*

The dogma-driven austerity we've lived through since 2010 has shown that we cannot cut our way to a broad-based, resilient economy that balances the books, while funding decent services and a modern welfare state.

Asking the super-rich and corporations to pay their fair share is only part of the answer. Whatever happens with Brexit, escaping the vicious circle of austerity and the stagnant growth that is forecast to last for years ahead means transforming UK productivity, currently running 15 per cent behind other major economies.

That's where the north comes in. In the digital age fewer industries need to cluster in the south east of England. Taking pressure off greater London's congested infrastructure is essential.

This means giving the north's creaking transport network a fairer share of investment than the £13bn allocated in this parliament. This total spending on the north is less than the cost of London's Crossrail 1 – even before another £350m was found to bail out its cost overrun.

While this government continues chasing the south east's endless transport capacity needs, northern commuters trying to get to work in January are, barring a late U-turn, again set to absorb above-inflation rail fare increases – and for what?

This year has seen the rail timetable meltdown presided over by transport secretary Chris Grayling. It recently took me seven hours to fly from Washington DC to London – and then the same time to get by train from London to Hull. Transpennine connectivity across the north has also deteriorated.

There could be no greater 'Tale of Two Cities' contrast than between the new £500m Canary Wharf Crossrail Station and Hull's Paragon Station. London's Canary Wharf has state of the art facilities – even a roof garden. Hull station meanwhile was recently voted by a passenger group as the UK's ninth worst station – and that was after £1.4m of 'improvements'.

Rail isn't the only problem. Local bus services have been cut and roads in the north account for a large chunk of the potholes backlog. The new national roads fund promises investment from the mid-2020s. That's jam tomorrow, but jams today.

Since the launch of the 'northern powerhouse' in 2014, transport spending has risen twice as much per person in London than in the north; and under current government plans, London is set to get five times as much transport investment per head as Yorkshire and the Humber over the next few years.

Rather than acting to end this unfairness, Grayling portrays a north enjoying a lavish spending bonanza. And when he talks about Transport for London projects that receive no central government funding, it only highlights the greater effort put into securing major private investment for London. No such effort is made for the north.

After years hyping government rail electrification plans, Tory ministers axed rail electrification plans in the north – even when, as in Hull's case, they were backed by the private sector. The 'new technology' of bi-modal diesel trains was used in the government's spin to justify this. However, bi-modal technology is not 'new', it is environmentally regressive and dashes any hope of delivering truly high speed services for passengers and freight.

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Chris Grayling famously told the north to 'get in the driving seat'. However, we've seen more devolved blame than devolved power. Transport for the North's powers are only advisory and feeble compared to those of Transport for London.

In recent decades, in other parts of the UK, such as East London's Docklands, we've seen what's possible when governments get serious about long-term local regeneration. For 1980s London Docklands, ministers didn't invent pre-conditions about adopting one made-in-Whitehall model of regional government and then cite insufficient co-operation as an excuse for withholding investment.

But now, the real power is held in Whitehall – and it's unclear whether the rail industry has the capacity to allow HS2, Northern Powerhouse Rail and Crossrail 2 to happen 'in lockstep', as Grayling has promised.

Moreover, if priorities have to be set, the government's past record is a fair guide to what those priorities would be; and south eastern schemes, such as Crossrail 2 and the Oxford-Cambridge growth corridor, are much further advanced than any of Transport for the North's plans.

Labour meanwhile proposes replacing the 1990s franchising system with an integrated public sector-led rail network – the norm in many European countries and around the world. This has potential benefits for travellers and taxpayers. There would be democratic accountability, healthier industrial relations and an end to the profit-driven incentive to rip off customers and cut corners.

However, planning to do all this within five years at the same time as wanting major investment, including a fairer deal for the north, will be challenging. Private sector investment will remain essential.

Labour's transport plans for the 2020s must also be consistent with the party's longstanding commitment to a real devolution of power from Whitehall to the regions. The London-centric approach of the past must end. **F**

Diana Johnson is the Labour MP for Hull North

RESTORING TRUST

The left needs to think about how it rebuilds institutions after Brexit
— *Martin McCluskey*

"It's nice to have dinner with someone who's less popular than I am." I didn't take it personally when a friend's husband recently opened our conversation with that. He's a car salesman – and he wasn't wrong.

Politicians and those involved in frontline politics are lucky if one in five of the population think they are trustworthy. The most recent Ipsos Mori Veracity Index put the proportion just below that at 19 per cent. Even though this number has been creeping down for years, no one in power seems to be paying attention. The past decade has seen every major public institution dragged through the mud. Parliament, the churches, the BBC, the police and the media have all – rightly – faced a reckoning.

At the same time, our country has been pulled apart by a financial crisis, austerity, a Scottish independence referendum and then the Brexit referendum. Yet, at the end of it all, in the public's eyes, not enough has changed. And they are right.

The financial crisis demanded a response that is still overdue and, in its absence, we have had a populist and nationalist howl that was amplified by half a decade of austerity. Labour's economic policies today address some of that anger, but that's only half the battle.

The Scottish independence referendum and the EU referendum both presented people with constitutional propositions and both tapped into a deep-seated discontent about the way our country is run. Addressing the economic and social problems that led to both these referendums is essential, but we need to go further. We also need to address the issues of identity, place and belonging that led people to opt for constitutional settlements that – in their eyes – best expressed their identity. And that means building institutions – and reforming existing ones – to deliver that.

In the 20th century, Labour had virtually a monopoly on building the institutions of the state that expressed our country's values and identity. The NHS and the welfare state met specific needs for health care and social support, but they also clearly showed what our country was about. The Open University increased access to education, but it was also a signal that we believed we were a country where higher education shouldn't just be the right of a privileged few. And the Scottish parliament and Welsh assembly met a demand for power closer to people, but in their creation they also recognised national identity and difference.

The last 10 years have seen our country divided and there is still no consensus about the direction we go in or the kind of society we want to build. The next election – if it delivers a majority Labour government – will be our first chance to do that. In setting out to change the way our country is run we must do three things.

First, we can't respond to populism with easy answers. The country that a future Labour government will inherit will be deeply divided. Our path out of that won't be found by trying to please all sides but by showing clear leadership, establishing the kind of country we want to be and then building the institutions to hard-wire that change into the way our country is run.

The NHS and the welfare state are essential parts of our social fabric and are valued not just for what they provide but for what they stand for

Second, we must preserve the institutions we still have. That means coming to power with a plan to revitalise the NHS and the welfare state. Both are still essential parts of the social fabric of our country and are valued by people not just for what they provide, but for what they stand for. We need to make the case for both – not from a defensive position, but as an argument for the positive power of state institutions.

Finally, we have to recognise that we do not have a monopoly on wisdom and work together to overhaul our constitution. That means convening a constitutional convention and using methods of consultation such as citizen juries to allow people to have their say about how we can change the way our country is run. Those sceptical about the success of such bodies need only look to Ireland where the constitutional convention and citizens' assembly prompted wide ranging change to the Irish constitution, including repealing the ban on abortion. Such an exercise in the UK could be similarly wide-ranging and could examine English regional devolution, the make-up of parliament, the future of the House of Lords and other issues which have been put in the 'too difficult' pile for too long. **F**

Martin McCluskey is Labour's parliamentary candidate for Inverclyde and a member of the Scottish Fabians executive committee

PATH TO PEACE

The UK has a unique role to play in ending the conflict that is ravaging Yemen
—*Stephen Twigg MP*

The conflict in Yemen is the world's worst humanitarian crisis. As it enters its fourth year, an entire nation has been devastated. Twenty-two million people are in need of humanitarian aid and protection. Famine, denial of access to goods, the destruction of medical and education infrastructure, mass cholera and diphtheria outbreaks are the daily realities for almost all Yemenis.

Eighteen million people in Yemen do not know where their next meal is coming from and eight million of those are 'severely food insecure'. The recent escalation of violence in and around Hodeidah has further squeezed access to the only port capable of feeding the country. The UN World Food Bank Programme issued the grave warning that unless hostilities stop, Yemen will experience the worst famine the world has known for 100 years.

Since the beginning of the conflict, the UK government has allocated nearly half a billion pounds to help relieve the humanitarian crisis. But aid alone is not the solution.

A political solution is the only way to end the war in Yemen and the UK has a unique role to play in helping to achieve this.

This has been an ugly conflict, with the UN Panel of Experts on Yemen concluding that all warring parties are 'responsible for a violation of human rights' and the 'deprivation of the right to life'. The Houthis have been accused

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of indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas, besieging the city of Ta'izz and using wide area effect munitions in built up areas.

In just nine days this August, 131 children were killed. This includes 40 children who were killed when their school bus was targeted by Saudi-led coalition airstrikes. The UK government did not condemn this attack nor call for an independent investigation. Instead Alistair Burt, minister of state for the Middle East, tweeted that he was 'deeply concerned' by the attack.

The time is ripe for real, meaningful action on Yemen. We must begin by publicly calling for an immediate ceasefire in Yemen and seek UN Security Council (UNSC) backing for the proposal. More than ever the people of Yemen need a ceasefire to stop the killing and as a means to bring all parties back around the negotiating table.

At the UN General Assembly earlier this year, the prime minister said that she believed global Britain had a role to play in upholding the international rules based system. If the UK is to be a force for good in the world, we must stand up for our values and lead UNSC efforts to demand full, independent, published UN investigations into violations of international humanitarian law by all parties.

The UK must also use its leverage as a 'pen holder' in the security council. In deeds as well as words, respect for international humanitarian law, a commitment to a comprehensive ceasefire and a redoubling of efforts to end the humanitarian crisis must be cornerstones of a new UK proactivity and leadership to secure peace.

When the international development committee reported on Yemen in 2016, the UK's role in Yemen was described to us as a 'paradox of aid and arms': We had committed millions for humanitarian relief yet are one of Saudi Arabia's biggest arms suppliers. The growing evidence of the impact of the coalition's bombing continues to raise serious concerns over the UK government's licensing of arms transfers to Saudi Arabia that could be used in Yemen. Arms sales to Saudi Arabia should be suspended whilst a fully independent inquiry is undertaken into all alleged violations of international humanitarian law by all parties.

The committee recently conducted a follow-up evidence session to receive updates from the NGOs working on the ground in Yemen and to question the UK government on its response. Depressingly little had changed. In fact things have got worse.

Looking back at three years of conflict, the humanitarian needs of the Yemeni people have increased from one year to another. For too long we've seen atrocities in Yemen, seemingly without an end in sight. The Yemeni people have been suffering for far too long. Peace is imperative as the first step towards rebuilding Yemen. **F**

Stephen Twigg is the Labour MP for Liverpool West Derby and chair of the House of Commons international development committee

UNIVERSAL MISERY

Lives are being damaged by the rollout of universal credit and many of those worst hit are struggling in low-paid work—*Sarah Owen*

This government stubbornly pursues universal credit like a dog refusing to give up its bone – even in the face of a series of failures, a lack of savings and increased child poverty. Every work and pensions minister, including the latest one, seems deaf to the pleas from politicians, charities and even the United Nations to halt the rollout and put a stop to what the UN has called the 'great misery' inflicted on thousands of people across the country.

There are now almost 1 million people receiving universal credit. Nearly 40 per cent of those are in work. Yet we are seeing more and more reports of crippling delays in payments, with foodbank use rocketing in areas following rollouts. The Trussell Trust reports an average increase in demand of 52 per cent at its foodbanks in the 12 months following the switch to universal credit.

Behind these damning statistics lie the real lives of people being damaged by a broken system. When I volunteered for a day with my local foodbank, it was early in the days of universal credit but the signs that something was seriously wrong were already there. I met a veteran who told me he had gone without money for weeks and was eking out what he had left by living – existing – in just one room of his flat. This former soldier shared with me his shame at having to use the foodbank, which, at the time of my visit, was providing 40,000 meals a year to people facing crisis – and is now providing 88,500.

That foodbank is in Hastings, the constituency of Amber Rudd, who as work and pensions secretary is the politician with the power now to stop the suffering. Unfortunately, previous form shows us that Amber Rudd won't stop the roll-out. She knows the statistics and the increased need on her own patch, yet she suffers from something that afflicts too many politicians – never admitting when they are wrong.

So, apart from the obvious solution of fighting for a Labour government, what can we do?

For trade unions, universal credit is a workplace issue. The very people that universal credit was supposed to help are the people at the sharp end of its failings; the 10 million people in the UK employed in insecure work with low pay and changeable hours.

Rather than encouraging and enabling people to work more, in too many cases it has left workers out of pocket. Universal credit takes 63p from every £1 once you earn over a certain amount. This has a major impact on certain sectors: we see it particularly among our members in retail, from Asda to Amazon and in the public sector, from carers to caterers.

The way the system works means, for example, that when a school support worker contracted to work for 22 hours per week can't pay their bills with what they earn, they would get usually £404 universal credit a month, if they don't do overtime.

But if that employee decides or is forced to do overtime, the deductions for overtime from their universal credit mean they effectively work for the equivalent of just £2.50 per hour. This is not a hypothetical situation – it is the experience of one single mum who works at her local school in the south east. She is just like thousands of members we represent.

And over the festive period this problem will see so many more workers and their families forced into crisis. With workers being given the option – or being forced – to do overtime in the run-up to Christmas, it means that many people will be looking at an even tougher January. Universal credit payments are calculated on earnings from the month before – which for a worker in Hermes or ASOS will look very different in the run-up to Christmas compared to when all the decorations have been put away. And if those workers were to go over the threshold for universal credit completely, they could wait another five weeks before receiving the money they need when their hours and pay go back to the unacceptably low levels we see in this economy.

Unions are now providing practical help to our members. GMB and the Child Poverty Action Group recently signed an agreement to train 100 people across the union in understanding universal credit and using CPAG's advice hotline and email to steer our members through the system.

Universal credit was supposed to make work pay, but that has not been the reality. Instead far too many workers are being unfairly penalised. Until people have a government that is prepared to protect them and their rights, charities will have to continue being the last resort, trade unions will have to continue resisting the attacks on workers and the Labour movement will have to continue fighting this most callous of Tory governments. **F**

Sarah Owen is a political officer for the GMB and a member of Labour's national executive committee

VOICES FROM THE STREET

We must listen to homeless women to offer them the support they need
—Amna Abdullatif

It is rare that we talk about homelessness and rough sleeping through a gender-based lens. Indeed, when the Fabian Women's Network held an event at the last Labour conference on this issue, Melanie Onn MP told us that it was the first time she had been invited to speak on women and homelessness and their complex and specific needs.

Although the tragically high rates of homelessness affect both men and women, it is crucial to understand the different causes of homelessness for men and women and the different experiences they face once they are homeless so that we can ensure that we offer the right support. Here, my focus is on women rough sleeping, however there is a much bigger conversation to be had on the numbers of women, often with children, who are living in temporary accommodation which is not fit for purpose. These numbers across most cities have continued to increase.

Austerity policies have had a serious impact on the average working family, and are directly fuelling the housing crisis. Homelessness has continued to rise year after year, and the statistics, show rough sleeping has increased by a massive 169 per cent since 2010. Women are said to make up 12 per cent of the rough sleeper population, a proportion which many organisations working on the frontline feel is a gross underestimate of the problem.

The leading cause of women's homelessness is domestic violence and the childhood trauma and abuse experienced by women and girls.

Women's Aid has reported that 11 per cent of women who left an abusive relationship slept rough, with 40 per cent ending up 'sofa surfing' in the homes of family or friends. We should be asking why it is that women who leave abusive relationships are placed in an even more vulnerable position, left homeless often with their children, while perpetrators are not. The answer is that our support for domestic violence survivors is just not adequate.

And many women affected by gender-based violence face other issues too, such as substance misuse and mental health issues, which many services are simply ill-equipped to deal with.

But rough sleeping among women is often a hidden problem. The risks they face on the streets are significantly higher than for men As a result many of them try to hide from public view for their own safety, choosing spaces to bed down where they cannot be easily seen or found.

Because of these risks on the streets, many women who become homeless depend on so-called 'survival sex' to have a roof over their heads for a night or so. No woman should ever feel forced to be in this position,.

Yet too often, when women ask for help they are turned away. According to Women's Aid, 54 per cent of women they spoke to who approached their local housing team for help had been prevented from putting in a valid homelessness application. It's no surprise that the massive cuts to the voluntary sector and more specifically the women's sector under this government have meant that 60 per cent of referrals to refuge provision in 2016/2017 were turned away, placing women in an even more vulnerable position.

There is a particular issue for women with no recourse to public funds, who have a much more difficult time accessing any form of support and as a consequence are placed in extremely dangerous situations.

Women's homelessness has been one of the focuses of work for the Fabian Women's Network over the last six months. We have developed a questionnaire for housing teams in local authorities across the UK (although legislation differs in the nations) on women's homelessness, to better understand the gaps in provision, and to assess good practice. Our aim is to develop recommendations to help tackle this pressing issue.

There are some key early lessons from our work. We need to ensure that we enable and support safe women-only spaces and provide gender-specific training for staff who are working with homeless women. Services should be designed to provide specific support for women who have undergone trauma. Women with children should be offered additional to avoid children being taken away from mothers. We need better partnership working to address the complex issues women who are homeless or at risk of homelessness face. And above all, we need to involve the women themselves. They know their experiences better than anyone else. We should listen to their voices. **F**

Amna Abdullatif is a member of the Fabian Women's Network executive. She is a community psychologist and works for a national domestic violence charity

POVERTY OF EXPECTATION

A Labour government would need to tackle the governance vacuum in Northern Ireland —*Stephen Bradley*

Brexit has brought Northern Ireland centre stage once again. But with British interest consumed by the conundrum of the Irish border, little attention is being paid to the vacuum in governance that has persisted since of the devolved assembly collapsed almost two years ago. Civil servants are now in charge, but are cautious about taking significant decisions as they lack any democratic mandate to do so. Regardless of where fault lies, leaving a region with the UK's most entrenched deprivation, lowest life expectancy and probably the most dysfunctional public services to languish half governed is not defensible.

That Northern Ireland can occupy so little of Westminster's attention is owed to brave leadership in the Major and Blair years, culminating in the Good Friday Agreement. It is curious to recall that secretary of state for Northern Ireland was once a big job, occupied by serious operators like Mo Mowlam, Peter Mandelson and John Reid. The comparison of those figures with Karen Bradley, who blithely admitted that she was

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ignorant of political divisions in Northern Ireland before taking the job, demonstrates the lack of importance given to the Northern Ireland brief today. But whatever the calibre of the individuals in the Northern Ireland office, there is little prospect of any resolution being brokered by this government, now shackled to one party in the spat, the DUP. It would also be a mistake to exaggerate the motivation of Northern Ireland's erstwhile leaders to resume governing. The DUP appears to be relishing its transformation from obscurity to Westminster powerbrokers, whilst for abstenstionist Sinn Fein being locked out of power is borne lightly compared to the shame of losing face.

Despite the immense progress made since Good Friday 1998, normalisation is far from complete. Northern Ireland is riddled with aberrations which would not be tolerated in any other part of the UK. An equivocal commitment to the rule of law underlies the entire society. Semi-retired paramilitaries smother business with parasitic protection rackets and ruin lives through the drugs trade. Within Unionism there is scarcely any senior figure who is prepared to, or to call out the sectarianism that accompanies the twelfth celebration to mark the Battle of the Boyne or to stand up for public safety by challenging the completely unregulated bonfires that precede it every July. There has been scarcely any outcry regarding credible reports of stolen votes in the Foyle constituency last year where a remarkable increase in proxy votes coincided with the election of a Sinn Fein MP by a margin of only 169 votes over the SDLP's Mark Durkan. Laxer electoral scrutiny in Northern Ireland has been exploited as a loop hole to undermine democratic transparency in the EU referendum, with the DUP being used to channel funds through for advertising in mainland Britain.

Throughout the stop-start years of devolved government in Northern Ireland, numerous scandals and credible allegations of corruption have emerged. While the fallout from the Renewable Heating Initiative (RHI) is predominantly a headache for the DUP, the ongoing enquiry into the scandal has revealed alarming details about the power wielded by SPADs (special advisors) within both of the former governing parties. A Labour government might have to accept that even were the main parties in Northern Ireland fit to or interested in governing, reaching agreement between them could be a long way off. In the absence of devolved government, Labour should be ready to get on with providing the people of Northern Ireland with governance that builds on the consultative partnership with the Dublin government established in the Anglo-Irish and the Good Friday agreements. The stand taken by Stella Creasy and Connor McGinn in demanding that reproductive rights reach Northern Ireland should be taken up as official Labour policy, along with a commitment to gay marriage. It is not reasonable to postpone the proposals to rationalise and modernise the North's spectacularly underperforming health services, until local political will emerges to implement them. Handled sensitively, action to safeguard the status of the Irish language need not be seen as a sop to one side – mirroring existing language legislation in Scotland and Wales would bring Northern Ireland into step with the other nations in the Union. Calls for measures to prevent electoral fraud in Britain seem entirely misguided, but in Northern Ireland there is evidence of irregularities that should be addressed.

Peace in Ireland should never be taken for granted. But after 20 years, the absence of widespread murder and bombing seems a low bar to set expectations. Giving up on one part of the UK until a deal can be done is utterly incompatible with the core mission of our movement to transform lives. Prioritising the restoration of power-sharing must remain at the heart of our Northern Ireland policy but that should not preclude providing governance any longer. **F**

Stephen Bradley is a GP and clinical research fellow and a member of the Fabian Society executive committee

Positive vision

Social democrats are too often defined by what they are against rather than what they are for. *Liz Kendall* kicks off this special issue on where the centre-left goes next with an agenda for change

Liz Kendall is the Labour MP for Leicester West

Across Europe, social democracy is in crisis. Traditional social democratic parties have haemorrhaged support in France, Italy, Greece and the Netherlands. In Germany – the birthplace of social democracy – the once mighty SPD fell to just over 20 per cent of the vote in last year's general election; its worst result since the second world war. Even the Swedish social democrats are not immune to this turmoil: a few months ago they had their worst result in a century.

At the same time, Europe has seen the rise of populist, anti-establishment parties on the far right and left – from Geert Wilders Freedom Party in the Netherlands, the AfD in Germany and the League and Five Star in Italy to Jean Luc Mélenchon's Left Party in France.

Here in the UK, the Labour party has so far avoided a similar fate. Many believe this is because Jeremy Corbyn has moved Labour decisively to the left, distancing the party from its social democratic predecessors. The UK's first-past-the-post system, combined with the political fallout from Brexit, have arguably also contributed to Labour's improved standing compared to our sister parties in Europe.

Whatever the different factors are that have played a part in the fortunes of European social democratic parties, all face the same underlying challenge: the profound economic, social and cultural changes that are eroding the foundations on which Europe's post-war social democracy was built.

Globalisation and technological change, the decline of heavy industry and a large unionised working class, mass migration, the end of deference and a growing individualisation are all destroying the class, cultural and political loyalties that were once the bedrock of social democratic support.

Despite the existential crisis facing social democracy, too little time has been spent defining these challenges and how they should be met. Too often, we have also focused far more on what we are against, than setting out a positive and optimistic vision of what we are *for*.

Progressive politics will only thrive, and arguably survive, when we provide a clear analysis of the forces shaping our country and an agenda for change that creates a better future for all – just as Labour's great reforming governments have done in the past.

Three priorities are now clear. First, achieving our fundamental goal of social justice and a more equal society means tackling wealth inequality should move to the top of the agenda.

Britain is a wealthy nation, but that wealth is very unevenly distributed. The top 10 per cent of households own 44 per cent of the nation's wealth, and the bottom 50 per cent own just 9 per cent. Wealth is also growing much faster than income. The Resolution Foundation has found that whilst wealth was steady, representing 2.5 per cent of national income between 1955 and 1980, now it stands closer to seven.

The returns to capital are increasing exponentially, but the returns to labour are decreasing. This matters to social democrats because wealth, and its unequal distribution, is having an increasing effect on individuals, society and our economy.

It is no longer possible to earn your way into wealth: you have to be born into it or marry it. If you don't have any savings or assets you are less likely to be able to cope with unexpected life events, like losing your job or getting a divorce. You are also less able to take risks or grasp opportunities, like setting up your own business.

Property wealth is becoming increasingly unequally distributed by generation and by region. Half of millennials will not be able to own their own home until they are at least 45 years old. This means instead of building up their own assets – buying their own house or saving for a pension – they end up boosting other people's wealth in the private rented sector. This will create substantial problems for the future.

The total value of the housing stock in London is bigger than the combined value of housing in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and all of the north. This contributes to our unbalanced nature of our economy and the unequal opportunities in different parts of the country.

Building more affordable homes, introducing strong incentives to increase employee ownership, and reviving asset-based welfare would all help those on low and middle income to build up their assets.

More fundamentally, we need to ensure a fairer system of wealth taxation. Current taxes on wealth and the income that derives from it are lower than those on income from work. As the IPPR has argued, this is unfair as it significantly benefits the wealthy. Any changes in areas like capital gains tax will be hugely challenging, but they are vital to breaking down the barriers to individual success and creating a fairer society as a whole.

The second priority for social democracy must be to empower individuals, communities and neighbourhoods through a more radical decentralisation of power than has ever been envisaged in Labour's past.

Delivering social justice and a fairer society is not only about ensuring the more equal distribution of particular goods, such as income, wealth, or skills – essential though these are. It is also about securing equal power and standing between citizens.

Ensuring people have more power and control over the issues that matter most in their lives is vital to addressing the disconnection and disillusionment many people feel with our democracy and politics.

It is also crucial to making better decisions. As the commission on the future of localism has argued, many of the most significant problems we face – from economic inequalities to the long-term sustainability of our public services – cannot be addressed by Westminster or city regions alone.

There are countless examples which show that local people are often best placed to know what works to improve their neighbourhood, and that the users of public services often know best how to shape these services in ways that better meet their needs.

So social democrats should reject a top-down, centralised approach which suggests everything should be done 'to people' at the national level. We should also look beyond devolving decisions to city regions, or even local councils, and towards building power in local communities and neighbourhoods.

Our starting point must be that power doesn't belong to politicians or civil servants – it belongs with the people. The task of political leaders is to work with communities and provide the resources, support and space so they can be genuine partners for change.

That means strengthening community rights, encouraging more forms of deliberative democracy, supporting community development and working with users to co-produce the design and delivery of public services.

Social democrats must reject the old-style politics rooted in the desire to take decisions about and for people and instead champion the new politics of empowerment to transform lives and restore trust in politics. Put simply, social democrats should seek to win power in order to give it away.

Social democrats should reject a top-down, centralised approach which suggests everything should be done 'to people'

The third priority for social democracy is to champion internationalism and ensure the institutions that underpin it are fit for the future.

Progressives reject the narrow isolationism of nationalist politics, because we understand global problems require global solutions.

Whereas populist politicians tell people they can turn the clock back on globalisation, or pull up the drawbridge (or build a wall) to keep the world out, social democrats know the only way we will successfully deal with issues from climate change to immigration and globalisation is by working with other countries. We believe Britain gains power and control by working with others; we don't lose it.

In particular, social democrats must remain proudly pro-European. Whatever happens to Theresa May's agreement, Brexit and Britain's relationship with the EU is not going to go away any time soon. Rather it is is set to be the defining issue of our generation. Our mission must be to make the case for Britain being part of Europe, and for Europe to reform itself so it better meets the needs of its citizens.

The stark reality is we face not just a crisis in social democracy but a crisis in the post-war international rules based order. Progressives need to inspire people to believe that now, and in future, their peace and prosperity depends on working together internationally, not attempting to turn back the clock or turn our backs on the world and hope it just goes away.

Social democrats cannot shape the future if we are trapped by assumptions of the past. Instead, we must believe in our enduring values, provide a credible analysis of the underlying forces that will shape tomorrow, and offer a compelling agenda for change.

This will not be easy, but it is the only way to renew social democracy and build a better future for the people we are in politics to represent. **F**

DYNAMIC LOCALISM AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH – *Anna Round*

The centre-left needs a bold, well-evidenced and systematic vision of fundamental economic reform, demonstrating how a fair economy is also a prosperous and sustainable one. At the heart of this is a new articulation of the role of investment, in driving growth and productivity as well as social progress. IPPR's recent commission on economic justice sets out one such detailed programme.

For 'labour' parties, the clue's in the name. The way we work is being reformed *de facto*. Policy must find structural responses to work insecurity, automation, longer working lives and the diminishing role of unions – to say nothing of changes to the labour market that may emerge post-Brexit. We also need new thinking on ownership – of housing, wealth and other forms of capital.

'Single issues' generate campaigning energy, but in a genuinely progressive politics few issues stand alone. The growing recognition that the green agenda is an economic and social as well as an environmental issue is one example.

Fragmentation and the proliferation of electoral options threatens entrenched two-party systems and those who rely on them. Parties *across* the spectrum need the courage to learn new ways of working in coalitions and partnerships, built perhaps around urgent issues (such as climate change) – or around particular places.

Dynamic localism, enacting a big vision through regional approaches and genuine opportunities for grassroots participation, will help to overcome economic and political disenfranchisement. In many parts of the north where a devolution deal is signed or in the pipeline, centre-left politicians have set out distinctive programmes for regional prosperity and social justice, pursuing inclusive growth and protecting the most vulnerable. What these emboldened local leaders could do with more extensive devolution of powers and a real end to the austerity that curbs their potential we can only imagine. A modern centre-left government could make it a reality. **F**

Anna Round is a senior research fellow at IPPR North

The seeds of recovery

Across Europe populism is on the rise and social democratic parties are taking a blow at the ballot box. Can progressive politicians reset the trajectory they're currently on? The Fabian Review asked eight experts for the policy ideas that are needed to revive the centre-left

BIG RESPONSES – *Anthony Painter*

European and US democracies are going through a period of profound upheaval. The glib way of characterising these upheavals is under the umbrella of 'populism'. But can the rise of political outsiders ranging from Donald Trump to Emmanuel Macron to Jeremy Corbyn to Matteo Salvini be explained as a single political phenomenon? Of course not. And one might add Brexit to this mix. Yet the causes of this disruption by the outsider have some similar roots.

These roots are planted in the financial crash which exposed economic, social and cultural fissures that had been widening for some time. Western societies haven't yet regained a sense of balance and probably won't do so for the foreseeable future. A simple desire to return to a period of moderation rather misses the point. There is a clamour for new responses – just no consensus about what they should be.

For the centre-left, there must be a realisation that rather more than technical tweaking and political reversalism is the order of the day. Big responses are needed to resuscitate democracy, address economic insecurity, square up to climate change, reinfuse education with a sense of collective mission, spread access to wealth and capital, radically devolve power to localities and develop a new social contract around good work.

The social democratic centre-left has been slow on the uptake – in most cases as it happens – and, thus, electorally punished. Labour's strong performance in 2017 is an exception that proves the rule. In resisting paying anything much more than lip service to new ideas such as universal basic income, radical new ideas for local and national participatory democracy, sovereign wealth funds, redistribution of equity capital and a serious conversation about what we expect the state to do and how we pay for it, the centre-left has vacated space.

A whole array of political outsiders have stepped into this space. People are not just demanding answers; they want big shifts and real change. **F**

Anthony Painter is the director of the action and research centre at the RSA and has edited a recent RSA collection Ideas for a 21st Century Enlightenment

RADICAL BUT DELIVERABLE – *Daniel Sleat*

The challenge for progressives around the world is whether we can be brave enough to reach out beyond the narrow confines of our core support and put together a policy agenda that answers voters' legitimate concerns and sets out a clear pathway to a better future.

The centre wins when it looks out beyond the narrow confines of class or culture and builds a coalition of support across the country. A trap many progressives are falling into is doubling down on securing their own vote, stacking up the support of interest groups and not asking the hard questions of how to convince those of different views to support them.

In terms of the policy platform, the answer that stems from the above should be fairly obvious. We need radical but deliverable policies to secure the support of voters across the political divide.

The political context within which progressives now need to operate is one in which the right is defined by responding to fears about the pace of cultural change and the left by concerns of how the benefits of globalisation have been spread. At present, voters therefore face an offer of two competing versions of the past, which, in their own way, are both conservative political platforms. A nationalistic right focused on immigration and an old-style left obsessed with state power as the sole agent for improving lives.

The centre must have answers to the big policy questions animating voters today but these answers must be both radical and forward-looking. Put simply, this requires the creation and articulation of a unifying economic and social message. This will need to include the right policies on immigration that show voters we understand their legitimate concerns, for instance through the introduction of electronic ID cards. On the economy it will mean a total rethink on how we do tax and how we support people as the nature of work changes. On infrastructure it will mean rapidly accelerating plans to link people better both physically – through faster transport links – and virtually – through enhanced internet capabilities.

Critically, it also means having a vision of the future that is optimistic. For progressives this should mean absolutely owning the issue of technology. If we can put together the right agenda on how technology can improve public services, how it can underpin green jobs, with the right mix of answers on how to support people through the journey into the fourth industrial revolution, we have a viable route back to power. **F**

Daniel Sleat is a special adviser to Rt Hon Tony Blair, executive chairman of the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change

"A useful first step would be to start talking honestly about capitalism again – recognising its strengths and accepting its weaknesses"

THE MARKET AND THE STATE – *David Coats*

The need for social democratic renewal in Europe is self-evident after a decade or more of electoral disappointment. We have to be clear about our medium to long-term goals and honest about our successes and our failures. Whatever we did in government in the period before the 2007–09 crisis was insufficient; we failed to create inclusive societies populated by resilient citizens with a voice in the process of economic change. Too many people were left feeling like victims of forces beyond their control.

A useful first step would be to start talking honestly about capitalism again – recognising its strengths as an engine of growth and prosperity, and accepting its weaknesses; unregulated markets create far too many losers. We need therefore, to rethink the relationship between the market and the state. How are concentrations of market power to be controlled and held accountable? Does this require a massive extension of public ownership (I'm sceptical) or changes to the taxation of profits/dividends; a root and branch reform of corporate governance, with workers on boards, a separation of executive decision making and supervisory oversight; measures to enhance industrial democracy such as works councils with strong statutory rights; and a new regime under which corporations must provide comprehensive, transparent information about the management of the workforce?

Most importantly, perhaps, social democrats must affirm their commitment to innovative regional and industrial policies, ensuring that no community is left behind. The causes of Brexit and the rise of the far right have the same roots. A practical agenda for shared prosperity is critical to the success of the mainstream centre-left in the next decade.

And finally, we need to get serious about rebuilding a contribution-based model of social security, with a strong element of universalism, most obviously in the payment of child benefit. Policies like universal basic income are intellectually interesting diversions from this more important political task. **F**

David Coats is the director of WorkMatters Consulting and a research fellow at the Smith Institute. He is the author of Fragments in the ruins: the renewal of social democracy, published by Policy Network

DEMOCRATISING SOCIAL DEMOCRACY – *Eunice Goes*

For more than 100 years social democracy was understood as the pursuit of socialist goals through the means of representative democracy with all the ideological compromises that that entailed. To win elections, social democrats moderated their programmes and were pragmatic about the 'means' to deliver socialist 'ends'. In the post-war period, this approach delivered the welfare state and three decades of prosperity, but these results were obtained at a cost. With time, the state became too bureaucratic and too complacent about the market. In other words, social democracy started to lose its 'social' and 'democratic' values.

The current crisis of the centre-left is partly the result of this approach to social democracy. But progressives can reverse their electoral fortunes by rethinking this formula and placing the emphasis on the 'democracy' of social democracy. The focus on democracy has several advantages. Firstly, it is a simple concept that enjoys widespread support. Secondly, a social democratic take on democracy has many radical possibilities.

For social democrats democracy rests on a rich conception of citizenship that entails political, civic and social rights that are exercised in all dimensions of public life. Thus, democracy is not only about sound institutions, the rule of law and the election of representatives, but also about the democratisation of the economy, of the workplace, of local communities, and even of existing political institutions. In practical terms, it implies the regular use of citizens' assemblies and participatory budgeting; it means workers on company boards, co-operatives and locally run public services; it means greater dialogue between citizens and representative institutions. In short, more democracy can be both the antidote to the atomism and sense of powerlessness promoted by turbo-capitalism and globalisation, and the much-needed tonic that renews social democracy. F

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

"Progressives can reverse their electoral fortunes by placing the emphasis on the 'democracy' of social democracy"

FAIR FOR ALL GENERATIONS – *Maria Freitas*

Age is now the best predictor of how people cast their ballots. And age should now be a key factor in a renewal of progressive politics.

Millennials – born between 1980 and 2000 – have lived through the 2008 economic crises and their difficult transition to the job market, financial strains and delayed adulthood have contributed to a sense of uncertainty about their future prospects, when compared to previous generations such as the early-retiring, asset-rich baby boomers.

Against this backdrop, the past few years have seen an upsurge in interest in the concept of 'intergenerational fairness', centred on the concern that today's young people cannot hope to achieve the same prosperity as older generations.

Age is, then, a critical new political cleavage that policy-makers should address and that progressives should tap into.

But intergenerational fairness is still a politically ambiguous concept and it needs to be replaced by a distinct political vision of what a fairer settlement between generations would look like.

To this end, I would offer three recommendations:

Progressives, lead the conversation!
The concept of intergenerational conflict and its political direction is still up for grabs. Progressives must be clear in their articulation: intergenerational fairness does not mean cutting pensions and setting baby boomers and millennials against each other in a race to the bottom. The progressive vision of intergenerational fairness is one which allows for a policy mix that would cater to expectations across generations.

Progressives, confront the tough choices!
Don't entertain the rhetoric of a war between generations but speak rather about intergenerational justice and how, under a new settlement, citizens would see interests fairly balanced.

Progressives, connect the dots! Intergenerational inequality is linked to other kinds of inequality
Evidence shows that a sense of disadvantage is strongest when millennials are most exposed to liberalised economic systems and highly flexible labour markets. For an intergenerationally-redistributive policy to be defensible, it needs to target wealth within age cohorts. Otherwise it could actually become a regressive policy if it penalises an interest group such as baby boomers as a single category – not all seniors are equally well off. F

Maria Freitas is a policy adviser at FEPS, the European progressive political foundation

POSITIVITY AND CHANGE – *Matthew Laza*

There isn't one 'magic bullet' which is going to save social democracy. But there are lessons we can learn in Britain from those countries that are translating innovative ideas into electoral success. What links these winning approaches can be described in two words – positivity and change.

I'm just back from New Zealand and what was striking meeting with prime minister Jacinda Ardern and her team was how their relentless positivity has been central to Kiwi Labour's rapid renaissance. As the sharpest political analyst in Wellington, Josie Pagani, described the situation before Ardern's overnight accession to the leadership on the eve of last year's general election: "The message from Labour was often 'your life is miserable, New Zealand is a dreadful place and getting worse, the world is scary, don't let it in, and by the way you're fat – vote for us!" It's a message I find British Labour exudes all too often.

The Ardern antidote to that hasn't been to turn the clock back and offer either a 'third way-lite' proposition or a rehashed vision of the seventies, but instead to redefine a politics of hope that is quintessentially social democratic but definitively forward-looking.

The policy that stands out is Kiwi Build – a scheme to spend $2bn into providing 100,000 affordable houses of the lifetime of the three-year parliament. That's a lot of homes and a lot of money in a country of under five million people. What's crucial about this policy is a word that the British left seems very uncomfortable with these days: aspiration. Whilst, rightly, the government is, taking other steps to help the poorest families, Kiwi Build is a policy unashamedly targeting middle-class, working, first-time buyers locked out of a booming property market. The scheme directly addresses the sense of economic imbalance felt by so many since the crash by saying 'with a bit of help from the government your dream of home ownership can still become a reality'. In doing so it helps to rebuild confidence in the enabling role of the state that lies at the heart of our politics.

Ardern came to power under the slogan 'Let's Do This'. I would say to my fellow British progressives, let's start to inject some of that positivity into our policy offer. F

Matthew Laza is the director of Progressive Centre UK, a new network connecting British progressives to the world. He is a former adviser to Ed Miliband

"What links these winning approaches can be described in two words – positivity and change"

UNITY NOT DIVISION – *Polly Mackenzie*

Philip Hammond is right. When explaining why MPs should support the Brexit compromise, he said the most important thing right now was to bring the country back together. The idea the pastry-thin Brexit deal can do this is, of course, laughable. But the goal is the right one.

A country cannot continue being this angry with itself forever. Young and old, north and south, white and black, leavers and remainers. Most political discourse at the moment seems to be about finding new ways to categorise the two tribes. Cosmopolitans and communitarians, says Stephen Kinnock. Somewheres and anywhere, says David Goodhart. Is the best we can hope for the simple triumph of my tribe over yours: the tyranny of the majority? Where has the ambition for a cohesive society gone?

To renew itself, not only the centre, but the left in general, needs to stop dividing people and start trying to unite them. Stop conducting intellectual purity tests and grasp the need to assume others are motivated by good intentions, even if they've come to the wrong conclusions.

National cohesion should be the ambition of our political and civic leaders in any era – but today, as Britain seeks to navigate change on an extraordinary scale, cohesion is essential. That's because the biggest problems of our age are those that require collaborative, imaginative thinking that breaches rather than reinforcing tribal divisions. Demographic change and its impact on our public services; the transformations wrought on society and our economy by technology; immigration on an unprecedented and unceasing scale.

We need to renew deliberative democracy at every stage of our politics. Trust in people and engage with them to ask the big questions: like how do we win consent and legitimacy for taxation? How do we build the capacity for nation states to regulate, tax and police the digital economy? How we build an inclusive British identity that celebrates diversity without compromising on people's need to a sense of community?

We can no longer assume that technocrats have the answers to these problems. Participatory democracy is the only way to return a sense of agency to those millions who were left behind by the economic model of the last generation. F

Polly Mackenzie is the chief executive of Demos

New dimensions

The old left-right divide means less and less as voters struggle to fit themselves into party boxes. If the centre-left is to revive, it must work within this new landscape, as *Paula Surridge* explains

Paula Surridge is senior lecturer in the school of politics, sociology and international studies at the University of Bristol

The last 12 months have seen much talk of the 'politically homeless', and the possibility of new 'centrist' parties is touted almost weekly. But evidence from elsewhere in Europe suggests that the centre ground in politics is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain. Has there been a retreat from the centre among British voters? How can we best understand how voters are positioned?

The 2017 general election in Britain seemed to cast doubt on the processes that had been observed in earlier elections. The rise of third and fourth parties in 2010 and 2015 dramatically reversed as the two-party share of the vote rose to its highest level since the 1970s. Underneath this apparent return to the two-party system there has been fragmentation in the positions of voters which does not neatly fit into our understanding of a single 'left-right' dimension. We cannot understand the 'centre' of British politics (or indeed the left and right) only with reference to this single dimension – a 'new' set of values among voters is also important and these values have been polarising. This has led to a fragmentation of both the left and right which will continue to contribute to volatility in the behaviour of voters struggling to fit their value positions into party boxes organised by a weakening political logic.

There are two ways in which we can understand the positions of voters. First, we can measure their values using attitudinal items, by measuring two sets of values: those associated with the traditional left-right divide about economic justice and fairness and those associated with a 'liberal-authoritarian' divide. In order to allow for comparability over time, the items used to measure these scales are:

Economic left-right dividing issues:

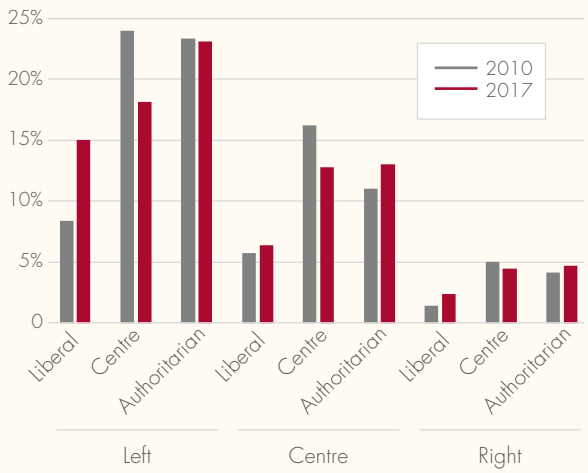
- *Ordinary people get their fair share of the nation's wealth*
- *There is one law for the rich and one for the poor*
- *There is no need for strong trade unions to protect workers' rights*
- *Private enterprise is the best way to solve Britain's economic problems*

Liberal-authoritarian dividing issues:

- *Young people don't have enough respect for traditional values*
- *Censorship is necessary to uphold moral values*
- *We should be tolerant of those who lead unconventional lifestyles*
- *For some crime the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence*
- *People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences*

In each case the response options are five-fold: strongly agree, agree, neither, disagree and strongly disagree. Scales are created by taking the average of the positions across the items, after correcting for the direction of the question wording. Each of the scales run from 1 to 5 with a notional mid-point of 3 (the result of giving a 'neither' response to all the items). In order to understand groups of voters on these value dimensions, these scale positions are further divided to produce a 'left', 'centre' and 'right' group on the left-right

Fig 1: Changing distribution of the electorate in value space, 2010 and 2017



Source: British Election Study

scale and a 'liberal', 'centre' and 'authoritarian' group on the liberal authoritarian scale.

The second way we can understand the positions of voters is by using their own self-assessment of their political position. This is usually done by asking people to place themselves along a single left-right dimension measured as an 11-point scale with 0 the most left-wing position and 10 the most right-wing.

Comparing 2010 with 2017 in figure 1, the value scales suggest a polarisation of the electorate and an emptying of the 'centre' but this is not on the economic left-right dimension. On this economic dimension around 55 per cent of the electorate were in the left group, a third in the centre group and 11 per cent in the right group in both years. In all cases though there has been a polarisation within these groups, such that the 'centre' group in each case is smaller in 2017 than it was in 2010. On the 'left' of the economic dimension this is largely the result of a move to more liberal positions, while elsewhere on the economic dimension there have been small increases in both the liberal and authoritarian positions at the expense of the centre.

This highlights the difficulty in talking about 'the centre' of British politics. While the overall distribution of the electorate on issues of economic justice has been relatively stable over the last 10 years, there has been a noticeable polarisation on issues of authority and tolerance. More people have both liberal and authoritarian attitudes. This is most stark on the 'left' of this economic dimension and highlights the challenges parties of the centre-left have faced both in the UK and elsewhere. Essentially, it has become increasingly difficult to form broad left-leaning electoral coalitions as the voters look to express their values across multiple dimensions. Many of the most salient issues of our time do not sit easily along the old left-right divide and are much more closely related to the polarising liberal-authoritarian divide. The vote to leave the European Union is one such example. Leave and remain voters are barely distinguishable in their positions on the traditional left-right divide but are poles apart on liberal-authoritarian values. Similarly attitudes to immigration, gender identity and the role of 'experts' are all strongly related to this liberal-authoritarian divide.

While it is important to recognise that economic values do continue to structure voting behaviour in general elections in the UK, they do so in part due to a party system which does not offer space for these other values around social issues like immigration and criminal justice to be fully represented. Elsewhere in Europe (most recently in Germany and Sweden), where the party system has allowed, we have seen fragmentation into groups much more clearly defined by these combinations of economic and social values.

This emptying of the 'centre' is also evident if we compare how people place themselves along a dimension which runs from left to right. The period between the 2015 and 2017 elections is relatively short, yet between these two elections there is a fall in the proportion of the electorate placing themselves in the 'centre' (whether measured as the single mid-point of 5, or as the combination of central points 4, 5 and 6).

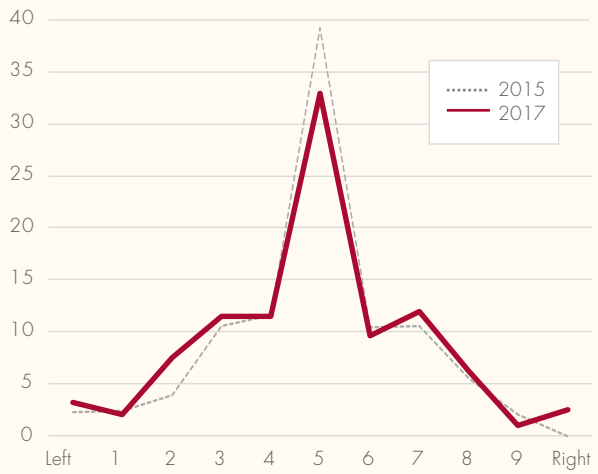
The chart also shows that the kick out to the 'left' end of the scale is a little greater than that to the 'right' end of the scale. This may seem puzzling; the value scales considered in figure 1 seem to suggest stability on left-right issues, with around 55 per cent of the electorate on the 'left'. But it reflects the way in which 'left and 'right' are routinely used in our political discourse to refer to both economic and social issues. Those with very liberal positions on the liberal-authoritarian scale are the group which place themselves most to the 'left' when asked to self-identify. The push out to the left and right in 2017 reflects the shrinking of the centre ground, that this is more pronounced on the left further reflects the increasing proportion of the electorate with liberal social values.

The evidence presented here helps us to make sense of the changing, yet on the surface stable, landscape of British politics. The political system which has so long been aligned broadly along a single left-right divide represented by a single party on each end continues to structure voting decisions. But the positions of the electorate are much more complex than this suggests and the volatility that led to the surge of the Liberal Democrats in 2005 and 2010 and the rise of UKIP in 2015 is still there.

Constrained by an electoral system which does not easily accommodate value positions on more than one dimension, voters struggle to fit themselves into boxes which only partly reflect their preferences. The challenge for the centre left is how to work within this new landscape.

The electorate are on average positioned on the left economically and so are open to appeals from left-wing parties. But increasingly this is not enough. As issues which connect with a different set of values become more prominent in our politics, some voters are left stranded between their economic and social values finding that there is no natural home for them. Talk of new centre parties fails to properly engage with this as it seeks to position itself between the two main parties economically but with a firmly liberal, pro-European stance. This is not where the voters are positioned. Only by engaging with where voters are positioned on social issues can parties of the left begin to recapture ground from the populist (authoritarian) right and understand why they are also losing ground to parties further to the left, both economically and socially. **F**

Fig 2: Distribution of the self-placement of the electorate on a left-right scale (0-10)



Keeping the faith

Labour has long been a broad church. Can its competing traditions continue to coexist? *Karl Pike* takes a look

Karl Pike is a PhD candidate and teaching associate at the school of politics and international relations, Queen Mary University of London

What is Labour's 'broad church'? And is it important? The old adage associated with Harold Wilson has passed down through generations of the Labour party. At its simplest, it is about doctrinal diversity and collegiality: that there are many definitions of Labour's socialism, and within the boundaries of democratic socialism all are welcome within the Labour party.

The 'democratic' aspect has tended to be the only real test, with the 'socialism' part subject to more flexible interpretation. Clement Attlee's little book, The Labour Party in Perspective, sets both out very well. All the while there is personal and political freedom with a democratic constitution, socialism is to be achieved by constitutional methods with political action the 'rule'. The 'heterogeneity', in Attlee's words, present at Labour's origin, combined with a 'natural British tendency to heresy and dissent' means there is no 'rigid socialist orthodoxy'. The democratic test saw the Communist party repeatedly turned away from affiliation. Later it saw the expulsion of the Militant Tendency. Doctrinal differences have led to temporary ruptures, but never the application of the rigid orthodoxy Attlee ruled out.

The broad church has not been without its critics. Ralph Miliband, writing in 1983, argued the broad church meant that one side, 'the right and centre', had determined "the nature of the services that were to be held, and excluded or threatened with exclusion any clergy too deviant in its dissent". Miliband's argument was reinforced by his more fundamental critique of the Labour party: that its 'loose amalgam' of different sources of thought meant that it was only, at best, loosely committed to "some vague and remote socialist alternative". In a recent essay, academics writing in a similar tradition suggested the central challenge for socialists today was to "avoid the social democratisation of those now committed to transcending capitalism". In other words, that those joining the Labour party under Corbyn's leadership should not, somehow, become intoxicated by the party's moderation.

There is general agreement that Labour should want to build a broad electoral coalition in the country, but internally should Labour retain its broad church? Both Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell have said, publicly, that it absolutely must. Typically, this has been in response to the threat of Labour MPs leaving, and to stories – wrapped up in the Brexit debates – about alternative parties.

The narrative from those close to the leadership is that a split would be damaging to Labour. And it surely would be. In addition to the immediate consequences, and depending on its nature and scale, a split could radically alter retellings of the party's past. Yet MPs who should be welcome in the Labour party continue to hear taunts of deselection from supporters of the leadership. The broad church mentality is key to preventing division from turning into rancour, but is too often absent. There should undoubtedly be great commonality within the broad church – even if such commonality is wilfully overlooked for factional reasons – but there need not be obedience. Indeed, such a stance should be intrinsic to socialism. Policies can be criticised. Political strategies the same.

The broad church mentality is key to preventing division from turning into rancour – but is too often absent

Of course, challenges to Labour's broad church are not new. Nor are Labour's differences purely doctrinal. Michael Foot wrote that Hugh Gaitskell was charged by his critics with lacking 'the imaginative sympathy to understand the Labour movement'. In Gaitskell's case, his attempt to rewrite Clause IV following Labour's 1959 election defeat – or, in Harold Wilson's words, asking the rank and file to take Genesis out of the Bible – showed a lack of imaginative sympathy with Labour people who, however impractical they felt Clause IV to be, were attached to it as a symbolic representation of the struggle between workers and capital. Wilson had a sharper focus on party management. He liked to let annual conference 'roar', then take big decisions in-house. It was a neat trick for a while, though one which ended with a betrayal thesis, deep animosity within a resurgent left, and a split. More recently, the leadership at the top of New Labour became associated with overtight party management and a disregard for Labour's traditions. Such behaviour was antagonistic to the culture of Labour's broad church. In short, Labour's leaders have always encountered trouble maintaining a sense of inclusivity while trying to lead.

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Much of this stems from Labour's competing traditions, the very substance of its plurality, but also the cause of division. The party was not the creation of socialist theoreticians, but it did attract them. Ever since, there have been practical socialists who think the objectives of the Labour party are usually pretty obvious at any given time, and theoretical socialists who find the party's pragmatism maddening. The party has always wrestled with the level of autonomy its MPs in Westminster should have. Conference has been 'sovereign', but party policy has long been 'interpreted' by the parliamentary party – seemingly the only practical way Labour could manage Cabinet government. And there has always been a tension between a more 'instrumental' view of Labour's politics – in other words, achieving power – and a more 'expressive view' – the prioritisation of principles, and the belief in non-parliamentary movements being as important as Westminster. These competing traditions have long been retained within a broad church Labour party.

The Corbyn leadership has juggled these issues in similar ways to past leaderships. Corbynism wasn't written down and endorsed when Corbyn rose to power in 2015, it has emerged over the years he has led the party. What he opposed was clear enough, but what he wanted 'transformation' to lead to was unclear. As such, Corbynism has developed in a typically Labour way. It is part theoretical, with talk of an 'institutional turn' and new models of ownership, and part practical, reacting to events and developing significant policy – notably on Britain's relationship with the European Union – on the basis of the context of the time and electoral politics.

Corbyn pledged to return policymaking to the members, yet through both circumstance and choice, big decisions are still being made by a small group of people in Westminster. Labour's rushed manifesto was a necessarily elite project, not a mass member endeavour. Shadow cabinet members continue to make policy announcements at conferences on the basis of their judgements, including their reading of the party. And returning to Brexit, the 'expressive' part of Labour's nature can be seen in the marches against Brexit, the 'instrumental' in the zigzagging of Corbyn and Keir Starmer.

Much of this shows continuity under Corbyn. Where the broad church is under threat is in the discourse between Labour party people who feel incredibly committed to Corbyn, and those who have doubts. The myth-making going on – the labelling of MPs coming into parliament a decade after Blair left as 'Blairites', or of those who present more radical views as 'ideologues' – risks adding to a sense of Labour as a faction rather than a party. In a broad church Labour party different ideologies can exist – within the generous bounds of democratic socialism – but Labour party people remain partisans within the same movement. To try to push people away on the basis of *their* socialist or social democratic ideology is to undermine a broad church Labour party. **F**

POWER PLAYER

Anger and despair have scarred our country and our politics. But it doesn't have to be that way, Lisa Nandy tells *Kate Murray*

For a politician whose focus of late has been anger, division and despair, Lisa Nandy is surprisingly optimistic. It is a difficult time, she admits, to be a progressive politician and to give people who are struggling a sense of hope. But nonetheless, for the first time in years, change looks within reach. "This is a very, very bleak time in politics, it's a very worrying time," she says. "But there is an opportunity now for Labour to unite the two very divided parts of the country in a shared agenda that actually genuinely empowers people to be able to make decisions about their own lives."

Nandy, once shadow energy secretary, famously stepped down from Jeremy Corbyn's shadow cabinet after less than a year in the job. But her decision was, she explains, not prompted by unease about Labour's direction of travel. "I've always been on the left of the party. It was never a disagreement with the policy agenda that led me to resign from the front bench," she says.

"In fact it was the lack of willingness from any part of the parliamentary party, including the leadership, to stop the factional infighting that led me to conclude it was completely unsustainable. Although I'm on the left of the party I've always felt that Labour's great strength comes from the breadth of our traditions which gives us the ability to reach into and hear what communities are trying to tell us and reflect that in the national debate."

So – after her resignation and away from what she calls the 'gruelling' demands of frontbench life – Nandy felt the biggest contribution she could make was to do some of that reaching out and listening. Her new mission led her – with politics professor Will Jennings and data analyst Ian Warren – to set up the Centre for Towns, an organisation dedicated to researching the state of our towns across England, Scotland and Wales. It's an issue close to her heart: as MP for Wigan she speaks with passion about the town and the way she feels it has been let down over decades. The demise of traditional industries has led to a slide in the working age population while the 'zero-hours, zero-hope' jobs which have replaced the mines and factories have meant there is less money around to keep towns thriving. "The spending power just isn't there to sustain our high streets and to sustain the community institutions that act as social glue – the beating heart of communities whether it's pubs, libraries, leisure centres or youth clubs," Nandy says. "Close communities are coming undone and the scars are visible everywhere."

The result, she says, is real anger and disillusionment, sentiments which laid the foundations for the Brexit vote. "Too many people believe Brexit is the root cause of the divisions, but actually we were becoming a much more divided country beforehand," she says. "At the most extreme, there is no sense of hope to be found anywhere in some of the hardest hit towns and in those areas it's no surprise that you start to grapple with despair and anger with the political establishment, where the sort of messages that Nigel Farage and his colleagues were peddling during the referendum about political elites were much more likely to find a home."

Neither Conservatives, who under Thatcher refused to rebuild the towns hit by job losses and then New Labour, which chose to concentrate investment in cities 'in the hope that the benefits would trickle to the surrounding towns' delivered for those communities. And as the decline took hold, so deep divisions emerged between the people who live in towns and their metropolitan counterparts. "On almost every major issue over the last 40 years towns and cities have been growing apart," says Nandy. "It's not just attitudes to the EU, it's also attitudes towards immigration, social security, LGBT rights and civil rights. On all these issues, 40 years ago towns and cities held similar views and now they are poles apart on all of those areas and it creates real electoral dilemmas, particularly for the Labour party where we are trying to talk at once to social liberals and social conservatives."

Despite the difficulties, Nandy says this is a challenge Labour must face head-on. "This a dilemma for Labour but Labour's dilemma is the country's dilemma," she argues. "These divisions are evident right across UK and there's no future for this country that doesn't bring those two sides back together."

Labour is in a strong position to deliver for both the most socially conservative and socially liberal, she believes, because of its roots in communities up and down the country.

Lisa Nandy: There is an opportunity now for Labour to unite the two very divided parts of the country in a shared agenda

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"Look at somewhere like David Lammy's Tottenham and my Wigan. One is diverse, one is homogenous; one is young, one is old; one was remain-voting, one was leave-voting; one is socially liberal, one is socially conservative – but what they do have in common is Labour. Consistently and over many decades people have gone out and voted Labour and vote for us still even following the referendum. It suggests to me there is a common ground on which a future can be built that looks very much like Labour values of solidarity, compassion, strong public services and a global future but with far more local control."

So where to start? Nandy believes the first priority for towns must be jobs – and not just any jobs, but good jobs. People in Wigan or Barnsley are proud of the mining heritage of their towns, but wouldn't want a return to that kind of job for their children or grandchildren. But nor do they want their youngsters to go into the low-skill, low-wage jobs that many are forced to accept. In contrast, Nandy points to Silicon Valley in the US, where a combination of government intervention to create a market, tax breaks and apprenticeships has allowed the area to become a world leader in clean energy. "Their young people are developing the battery technology of the future while young people in Barnsley are assembling solar panels for the minimum wage and packing boxes in ASOS," she says. "Those communities are angry because they know the future could be better than that. Why shouldn't they have the opportunity to power us through the next generation like their parents and grandparents powered us through the last?"

The hope comes from the people – they got there ahead of us and they saw things had to change before we did

Jobs though, will require investment in the infrastructure that will pave the way for economic growth. And there we come to Nandy's second priority for the future of towns: power. Too many decisions on issues like transport and skills are made "hundreds of miles away by people who have no skin in the game, who look at towns and see only problems when we see potential", she says. "Those decisions about infrastructure and skills have to be taken much closer to home and have to be much more responsive to the ambitions of the local community. The solution for Wigan is never going to be the same as the solution for Grimsby, so it relies on those decisions being powered from the bottom up rather than being imposed from the top down."

Labour will need to be committed to more meaningful devolution than just "simply transferring power from one group of men in Whitehall to another group of men in Manchester town hall".

"That is exactly the same city-centred model of investment, growth and political power that has failed to deliver for our towns for so long and has been so soundly rejected by the people that live in them," she adds.

Nandy is confident that Labour's ministers-in-waiting understand this and indeed she has been talking to some of them about what a real transfer of power to communities might look like. But she admits: "There's always this tension in the Labour party that when we are in opposition, we tend to be quite keen on restoring power back to the people who rightfully own it and then when we reach government we become centralisers again. This is a historic tension within the party and in recent decades the centralising tendency has won out – but I think that would be a real mistake. My experience of working with Westminster and Whitehall is that they are not capable of seeing the potential – they see only problems. It's only by looking at the assets and strengths in our communities that we'll deliver on their ambitions."

In some ways, Nandy feels, opposition has been good for Labour in allowing it to think about some of these really big questions that will define the country's future. Now that these questions – about power and the nature of the economy and who benefits – are on the agenda, "politics feels political in a way that it hasn't been in recent decades and that feels exciting". And while national politics has in many respects – like the country as a whole – become more angry and divided, she senses a mood on the ground for change. "Labour conference for me this year felt tremendously exciting because there was a willingness to grapple with some of those questions about power and where it lies, about the structure of economy and about the future of a Britain that is prepared to look outwards and is also concerned to address the concerns of people at a very local level," she says. "For all of the division that's reflected in the national political debate, when I speak to Labour party members what I find is a pragmatism and willingness to reach out and to listen that is lacking from the national debate."

Yet after Labour's unexpectedly strong performance in last year's general election, some would argue that impetus has been lost, as Brexit has dominated the national debate. Again, Nandy prefers to focus on the big picture.

"It feels like we've taken what was a political earthquake, a roar of noise from across the country during the referendum and turned it into a technical and legal debate around the withdrawal agreement and a set of trading arrangements that are important but are in danger of completely missing the point," she says. "That big question about who we are as a country, where are we going and what is the basis for a decent shared life in this country is one that we've got to grapple with and got to be able to answer convincingly. I do feel optimistic about the prospects of Labour being able to do that but it needs all of our energy and creativity."

We are in a moment, she says, where many of the assumptions that have held good for decades have been demolished. "Neoliberalism has collapsed – there is no appetite among the public any more for that idea that you can have a small group of people who are immensely wealthy and some trickle-down to try and protect people at the bottom," she says. "It is no longer sustainable that you can deny large swathes of the country real agency and control over their own lives."

In that sense then, perhaps the anger and despair that are so evident in our towns and beyond really can bring positive change. Nandy certainly thinks so. "In the end the hope comes from the public – they got there ahead of us, they saw things had to change before we did and now our job is to give shape and voice to what comes next." **F**

Kate Murray is the editor of the Fabian Review

Tricks of the trade

We need to challenge the way we trade, argues *Nick Dearden*

Nick Dearden is the director of Global Justice Now

The most important element of Brexit for many Conservative MPs is not controlling migration. Nor is it parliamentary sovereignty, per se. It is Britain's ability to conduct an independent trade policy.

One of the most lasting legacies of Donald Trump might well not be his disastrous decisions on Iran, or even his encouragement of authoritarian strongmen, but his trade wars with the rest of the world.

How has something as arcane as trade policy become so central to the political landscape? In a nutshell, because global trade rules today are about far more than tariff levels. They encapsulate the rules of the global economy. They are about how we regulate our food standards, how we run our public services, how much we pay for our medicines. They touch on workers' rights, public services, and climate change.

But more and more working people in Europe and North America are falling out of love with free trade. It's no wonder when you think that over the last 20 years, under the rubric of free trade, jobs, industries and regions have been hollowed out thanks to the 'race to the bottom' logic of modern trade rules.

Millions of Europeans and Americans were active in opposing and defeating the enormous proposed trade deal between the EU and US, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), not simply because they feared for their jobs but because they opposed the corporate takeover which modern trade deals represent.

TTIP threatened to weaken European food standards by forcing the import of chlorine-washed chicken, steroid-filled pork and hormone-treated beef into European markets. It threatened to make the partial privatisation of the NHS all but irreversible.

At TTIP's centre would have been a 'corporate court' system allowing big business to sue governments in secret, without the right of appeal, for treating them 'unfairly'. 'Unfair' treatment, we've discovered from such corporate courts which already exist, includes putting cigarettes in plain packaging (Australia), removing toxic chemicals from petrol (Canada), increasing the minimum wage (Egypt), or placing a moratorium on fracking (Quebec).

So for the hard Brexit Tories, trade is the means of creating a 'Singapore on Thames', a highly deregulated and liberalised Brexit Britain. This vision has been set out in two important documents outlining model post-Brexit deals drafted by right-wing think tanks and backed by senior Tories. Both would unleash a wave of deregulation unseen since Margaret Thatcher's government was at the height of its power.

But as the right wing talks about trade policy, social democrats are relatively silent. Until recently, social democrats across Europe had largely bought into the free trade dogma; that trade is the most powerful weapon we have for lifting people out of poverty, and that it brings cheaper and more diverse products. This is why social democrats have been unable to harness the mood of a public which feels marginalised, ignored and powerless.

So a truly left-wing trade policy, and by extension a social democrat approach to the global economy as a whole, is urgently needed. What should it look like?

First of all we need to recognise that trade and investment (the two are increasingly dealt with together) can be an important economic tool, but only if governments are allowed to regulate, tax and constrain the power of those corporations doing the investing and trading. Trade rules today wipe away government's ability to intervene in the economy, but this is counterproductive, because such intervention is the only way to make trade work. The big trading nations of Scandinavia traditionally made trade work through high levels of regulation and welfare provision.

Second, as important as trade might be, it's not an end in itself. Trade is clearly not more important than tackling climate change or upholding human rights or delivering full employment or building decent public services. Yet trade policy is currently far more enforceable at an international level than any of these areas of public policy-making. Trade rules must be legally subordinate to bigger social goals.

Third, trade deals have become too big. Trade negotiators should not have power to create rules on food standards, on public service privatisation, on medicines monopolies, on how a government is able to spend tax money. In so far as trade deals *do* change the goods we buy they should have a built-in guarantee to raise standards.

Trade deals have always been about power. Throughout Britain's imperial history and beyond we have forced countries into exploitative relationships where those countries provide the raw material we need for our growth and get precious little in return. This too must end. Trade deals must be mutually beneficial.

Finally, trade policy must be transparent and democratically accountable. As things stand, MPs have no right to set guidelines for government trade negotiations, no right to scrutinise negotiations and they have no ability to amend or stop trade deals. Liam Fox's trade discussions with Trump, and with authoritarian regimes in Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the Philippines are too confidential for MPs to know about. This is a shocking democratic deficit and must be addressed.

Fortunately, Labour's trade spokesperson Barry Gardiner has recently released his trade strategy, Just Trading. This is a welcome attempt to rethink trade policy. But it won't be easy, and we can only make real progress in building a world for the many if we build a global trade justice movement able to develop these policies and hold a Labour government to its promises. Extreme free trade policies have played a role in Brexit, the election of Trump and the rise of the far right internationally. More of the same will make things worse still. If we want to build a better world, we need to get involved in shaping the trade rules of tomorrow. **F**

Working progress

John McDonnell's plans to extend workers' rights mark a real break with the past by tipping the balance of power back towards employees, writes *Melanie Simms*

Melanie Simms is a professor of work and employment at the University of Glasgow

At the 2018 Labour party conference, the shadow chancellor, John McDonnell, outlined a set of policies that would significantly expand and extend workers' rights in the UK if the party were to win a future general election. Included in those plans is the creation of an inclusive ownership fund which would hold up to 10 per cent of the equity of publicly-floated companies. Returns from this equity (dividends) would then be split between workers and the government, with workers receiving up to £500 each per year, and the Treasury receiving the remainder.

If these plans went ahead, they would signal one of the most profound changes of corporate governance regulations the UK has ever seen and might well trigger considerable resistance from companies. But the idea is not completely outside the experiences of governance regimes. Many countries have some kind of mechanism for integrating workers' voices into decision-making processes and many companies have schemes that allow at least some workers to benefit from rising share prices through stock options schemes. The proposed workers' fund would bring together these two ideas in the hope of providing financial benefit to both workers and the state.

This suite of policies is a clear marker that a future Labour government will change direction in very significant ways

Immediate reactions were varied. A lot of attention focused on the fact that workers would not be able to sell the shares, only to benefit from any dividend payments made. It is not uncommon that workers with stock options can only trade them when they leave the company or at particular, agreed and announced moments. But this does raise a question as to whether this scheme would, for workers at least, be little more than a complex bonus system. It has the advantage that it would be automatic rather than discretionary, but in practice many organisations have systems for awarding bonuses of at least £500 to workers in years where they have performed well.

A second criticism is that the scheme was unambitious as £500 is a relatively small sum in comparison with the dividends paid out by many large and profitable companies. What those objections miss is that the remainder of the fund is intended to contribute to the public finances. The Labour party will have to emphasise this aspect of the idea more strongly if they maintain this commitment to the proposals as this is at the heart of the policy.

Labour has estimated that this approach would generate around £2bn per year which is clearly intended to give the wider public a return for the massive wealth generated by our largest and most successful companies. And this really gets to the heart of the matter; what kind of corporate regulation do we want 10 years after the financial crisis nearly crippled us all? This proposal is one of several that is intended to give workers more voice in the running of companies, and to try to secure some of the wealth generated to the wider population.

But there are pitfalls that we need to watch out for. In essence, what is proposed is a form of taxation based on ownership and corporate governance structures. Large parts of the UK corporate landscape are not companies that pay dividends; mainly companies in private ownership which includes both large family-owned business and those owned by private equity. There are also questions about jurisdiction. Assuming the measures would apply to publicly-owned companies listed in London, that includes some companies that do not operate in the UK, but which are listed here. Equally, it may provide an incentive for companies to list on overseas exchanges.

Perhaps more concerning in the era of the gig economy, there may also be an incentive for some companies to classify their workers as contractors rather than employees, thereby taking them out of the remit of this proposal. This could almost certainly be addressed in any proposed legislation and enforcement, but needs to be kept an eye on. Perhaps more alarmingly, the academic evidence about share-ownership schemes and their links with productivity and motivation are mixed at best. That said, there do seem to be some benefits, especially in smaller companies.

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These are, inevitably, controversial proposals. Many business representative organisations quickly criticised them and pointed out that they could lead to lower levels of investment or even capital flight. That is, of course, a possibility. But it is clearly a calculated gamble on the part of the Labour party. It is a policy that is an important marker that the terms of business will change if they are elected. Many countries have regimes that require higher levels of worker voice and corporate taxation in one form or another so it is unclear exactly who might relocate where and why. But that is not the main issue. The issue is that Labour envisages an economy where the rewards are shared just a little more evenly across the country and where there are small nudges in the direction of bringing the interests of workers, citizens and financial directors more closely together.

The broader programme of workers' rights proposed by McDonnell in the September speech and preceding announcements is innovative and represents a real break with the past of thinking about the respective balance of influence of workers and business. Policies include an overhaul of trade union rights, including promoting sectoral collective bargaining and addressing the anti-union regulations of the past 30 years, improved rights for gig workers, and strengthening the representation of workers in policy making through the re-creation of a Ministry of Labour. Taken as a whole, McDonnell is right to argue, as he did in his speech to TUC Congress in September, that this is a programme of initiatives intended to 'tip the balance' back towards workers.

In some respects it seems odd even to have to explicitly say that the Labour party has long represented the interests and voices of workers, but much of the debate until very recently has not been about how to achieve that. These proposals clearly position the contemporary Labour party as being prepared to challenge the dominance of business in policy making. It is undoubtedly true that workers' rights have been undermined both through active policy making such as the mercifully short introduction of fees for employment tribunals, and measures such as the Trade Union Act 2016, and through neglect by, for example, failing to regulate the problems of bogus self-employment that dog some sectors.

This suite of policies is a clear marker that a future Labour government will change direction in very significant ways. It is creating clear water both between other parties (not only the Conservative party) and also with the Labour party of the recent past. Even if some of the policies were watered down or failed to gain support more widely, there is enough in this agenda that offers hope of a genuine effort to shift the balance of interests. What remains to be seen is whether this is sufficiently important to shift voting intentions with Brexit looming as a far larger issue. What it has undoubtedly already done is provide the basis for a debate and conversation about the kind of economy and society we want, and to offer a clear vision of what Labour believe is needed to get there. **F**

Competing priorities

Outsourcing our public services has failed. It is time for our communities to take back control, argues *Emma Dent Coad*

Emma Dent Coad is the Labour MP for Kensington

Ministers like to talk of competition and choice in public services. Introducing new providers is a way of driving up quality, efficiency and value for money, so the story goes.

The reality is very different. Let's take some examples from my home patch, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, once dubbed by a former cabinet member the 'richest borough in the universe'. While the average life expectancy in the borough is indeed the highest in the country, this is made up from an average including the area around Knightsbridge, where for a white man it is an incredible 92 years, and Golborne, where for a man of Moroccan origin it is just 63. We are living with a series of failures of outsourcing and mismanagement across our public services, all of which are having a damaging impact on our communities. First, we are facing a crisis in adult social care.

The council is currently responsible for the care of 680 vulnerable people in their homes, a drop of 200 in the past two years as it accepts responsibility for fewer and fewer people? One in three new home care clients has dementia and needs specially trained support.

In the old days, this service was delivered in-house. Meals on Wheels provided a hot nutritious meal daily to people at home. Both of these services have been reduced and outsourced. Then there was the ill-fated Chelsea Care, set up by the council to provide practical support to people at home. It was predicted to make a profit within two years, but was an utter disaster and after various bail-outs, it was eventually closed. It lost the council more than £1m and failed our most vulnerable residents.

In a fever of ill-advised and sometimes reckless outsourcing, home care was tendered out, half to the south of the borough and half to the north. There has been quite a turnover of providers and with 1,100 vacancies for home care workers in the borough, the service is struggling.

You don't have to do much digging to find that many home care providers are set up by vulture – I mean venture – capitalists. They make a killing in the first year or two, then when the business goes pear-shaped, they close it down and set up under another name (accumulating tax losses on the way). These home care providers fail because they don't invest in their staff, through training, good management, or decent terms and conditions. Many staff members are on low pay and zero-hours contracts without sick or holiday pay. Many care workers aren't trained for the work they undertake. Many take the work because they like working with older people. Thus their kindness is abused, for profit.

Meanwhile, despite the crisis, the council is cutting the adult social care budget by £2.5m in 2018/19 – while spending over £6m on extending Leighton House Museum. Not repairing it. Extending it.

Nursery provision in Kensington and Chelsea is in crisis. Council-run nurseries have been merged or handed over to private providers. Despite assurances to the contrary, these providers can whack up their fees when they wish. A recent case has seen one provider, who had received a poor Ofsted report, nonetheless demanding a fee increase of 68 per cent, with no notice for parents to make alternative arrangements for the care of their children if they couldn't find the extra cash. Some have been forced to stop working altogether as the fees were equal to or more than their income.

In both the above cases, the council can and does wash its hands of responsibility, even though it is they – not the outsourced providers – who owe the duty of care to their residents.

Then there's housing, which faces its own crisis. There are 2,500 households in temporary accommodation, and 3,000 households on the waiting list. Management of council housing was handed over many years ago to Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation, but over the years it evolved, with a constitutional change to an arm's length management organisation so it could receive Labour government decent homes funding. Along the way the supposedly tenant-led board was reconstituted to allow an intake of 'experts' in finance and housing management.

It was under this arrangement – a board top-heavy with outside experts – that a shocking 5,000 repairs were left undone, tenants were evicted without consideration after bereavement, illness or job loss and residents with concerns about fire safety at Grenfell Tower were treated as 'vexatious complainants' and sent cease and desist letters. Two of these 'vexatious complainants' died in the catastrophic fire they had predicted, in which 71 of my neighbours died horribly.

Cases of incompetence (at best) and alleged potential corruption (at worst) are now being reported within RBKC property services. Over the years numerous publicly owned buildings have been sold to the private sector, or upgraded at taxpayers' expense then rented at preferential rates to private business. This has included former school buildings handed over to the private sector. Most recently North Kensington library was saved by a huge local campaign from the indignity of being handed over to a prep school.

More alarming still was the purchase by the council – without any consultation whatsoever – of our local college providing education and training for 16 to 24-year-olds plus an array of courses. The council's plan was to demolish the building and replace it with private housing and potential educational space which could be offered to the former college – though this was not guaranteed.

A recent audit report on the purchase divulged that the lack of consultation was a deliberate ploy to prevent any kind of protest, particularly from local councillors (of which I was one). The report was damning. Campaigners are planning to save and improve the college, but ownership by the council, obtained by highly dubious means, is a major hurdle.

Examples of council failure like these show very clearly that we are in the grip of a system which is not working.

Council taxpayers are lining the pockets of venture capitalists, mountebanks and incompetents and getting a poor service in return.

The mantra is choice and healthy competition, but the reality is that competition has often delivered worse and more expensive services and there is little if any choice. In 2016 I was a member of a sub-group which looked at council procurement. We produced a report which was so damning that the council sat on it for 18 months and refused to discuss it publicly. On one contract alone we lost £10m, and are now taking the service back in-house with further losses inevitable.

In short, the government is paying our council to fail. So how can Labour provide better quality public services and give communities greater control?

It will take a while to bring services back in-house where councils can properly manage and scrutinise the services, but it must be done.

In many cases there is a lack of skills needed to manage these services. This has been especially evident post-Grenfell, where continued failure to house homeless people is shameful and indefensible.

To address these damaging skills gaps in our public services, we must invest in people, through training, good people management, and by employing people who care. Making efforts to bring in locally based staff is a good place to start. Local people will understand residents, and are more likely to have a personal interest and concern for the wellbeing of those in their community. In our case, one proposal is to use our saved and reorganised college to run courses to train future council staff in the many skills needed to run a successful council.

Thus we take back some control, and put it into the hands of those who care: our community.

We need real culture change, not the kind of public relations exercise which, in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has seen the council appoint a big team combining media communications and community engagement in the wake of its abject failure over Grenfell Tower and its aftermath.

The mantra is choice and healthy competition but the reality is that competition has delivered worse services and there is little if any choice

Our council, indeed all councils, need to engage with their residents purposefully rather than just attempting to pacify them. They need evidence-based decision making not decision-based evidence making.

Locally, and nationally, outsourcing of council services has failed, and government money – our money – has lined the pockets of private business, much of which is registered abroad and pays no UK tax.

We need to recognise that the narrative of being forced to pay senior managers what they could earn in business has attracted the wrong kind of people to local government. The brutal and opportunistic profit-led business model has lost councils millions and has no place in local government.

We need to support, train and grow a new generation of skilled people at all levels in local government, who will be capable of taking contracts back in-house and running them efficiently and economically, so taxpayers' money is spent where it is needed.

We need to acknowledge, respect and praise good public servants, pay them a decent wage with good terms and conditions and offer a career path which will keep experienced and loyal workers long-term.

Put simply, we take back control of our services by taking over. That way, instead of offering an illusion of choice and competition which brings only diminished and costly public services, we can offer our communities the high-quality services they deserve. **F**

Books

Viral politics

An account of how digital technology has disrupted democracy around the world offers some hope for the future, writes *Reema Patel*

Reema Patel is a democracy expert and Fabian Society executive committee member. She has worked on numerous online and offline public engagement programmes relating to emerging technologies, economics and policy and led the RSA deliberative democracy programme, the Citizens' Economic Council

Martin Moore's Democracy Hacked offers a compelling account of how data-driven big tech platforms have facilitated political surprises across the globe, including Modi's surprise election in India, Orban's victory in Hungary, and the Five Star Movement's rapid ascent in Italy. These electoral successes foreshadowed the Vote Leave campaign, as well as Donald Trump's victory in 2016.

In his case studies of these campaigns, Moore shows how a coordinated group of polarised, networked individuals were mobilised to spread misinformation and emotion-fuelled messages ('memes'), often using bots programmed to respond to signals online on unfiltered peer networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, and Instagram to powerful effect. Although Moore does not go so far as to claim that these techniques were solely responsible for the victories of Trump or Vote Leave, he does point out that they are symptomatic of how powerful minority groups, backed by large investments, have used data-driven AI (artificial intelligence) to destabilise existing democratic structures; relying on the mobilisation of radicalised groups by tapping into the anger of politically disaffected voters to achieve their full effect. As a consequence, this has unleashed a torrent of homophobic, misogynistic, racist and anti-semitic abuse simultaneously directed at the 'other' and the political elite.

Moore argues that an online climate has been created which is polarised, entrenched, anonymous and hidden. Political campaigns were aided by techniques allowing organisations such as Cambridge Analytica to deploy 'dark ads' and A/B testing, a method of simultaneously using and comparing emotional reaction to different webpages, which makes content virtually unchallengeable by those who are not the recipients of those ads. Campaigns were able to spread messages deterring natural supporters of one side of the political divide from voting and to mobilise the disaffected by creating the effect of a 'false consensus' through the existence of online echo chambers. The more controversial content is, the more viral it is likely to be, offering a strategic communications advantage to overly simplistic political narratives. At one point Moore suggests that this in part explains the decline of centrist politics (although this claim is poorly evidenced).

Democracy Hacked
Martin Moore, Oneworld, £16.99

None of these effects have emerged by design. Rather, Moore suggests they are born of a rapidly moving tech culture that considered itself a successor to the 'counter culture' which emerged in the heady optimism of the early days of the internet. However, since those days, tech companies have evolved from the model of 'early pioneerism' towards what Moore describes as 'surveillance capitalism'. Facebook, Google and other companies had worked out over time that their most valuable asset was personal data, and that detailed information about the individuals on their platforms made for the most powerful advertising medium in the world. Moore also points out the extent to which these techniques risk unquestioning adoption by 'surveillance democracies' – citing India's controversial personal ID system Aadhaar and China's adoption of its 'social credit' scoring system as examples of how nation states are increasingly coming to rely upon data-driven and AI technologies to 'nudge' their citizens.

In what feels like a hurried but important conclusion to his book, Moore highlights that another world using tech is possible; one which is more empowering and more deliberative. He cites digital democratic experiments such as Estonia's ID system which affords greater transparency to the citizen than to the state, Taiwan's crowdsourcing online platform that has allowed it to ensure Uber responds to its citizens' values and Paris' participatory budgeting process which has given its citizens the power to decide how to allocate 10bn euros a year. But these interventions remain on the margins and are limited in both scale and adoption. It is for progressives to work out how to create a better, more inclusive and more deliberative digital space. That work has only just begun. **F**

Revolutionary spirit

Nan Sloane reflects on how an anarchist thinker helped the early Fabians choose between dynamite and democracy

In September 1886 the Fabian Society held a meeting at Anderton's Hotel in the Strand. It was so rowdy that the hotel banned the society from ever holding meetings on its premises again. What could possibly have caused such a furore to erupt?

Formed in 1884, the Fabian Society had grown out of a New Age group dedicated to peace, love and spiritual harmony. Within a few months it was joined by Charlotte Wilson, an intelligent and determined young middle-class woman who brought with her what George Bernard Shaw later called 'an influenza of Anarchism'. She would force the Fabians to make a fundamental choice about its purpose which would determine the future of the society.

Anarchism could trace its roots back to the English Civil War, but in the 1880s socialism was still new and exciting. Some socialist groups had parliamentary aspirations, but anarchists saw parliament as both an irrelevance and a barrier to revolution. Most people at the time regarded socialism as a dangerous doctrine, but anarchy even more so. Anarchists were great talkers and writers but they also believed in action. In March 1881 Russian anarchists assassinated Tsar Alexander II, and in July an International Anarchist Congress in London approved 'propaganda of the deed' – effectively terrorism – as one of the principal revolutionary tools.

In the early 1880s different political groupings were not as separate as they are now. People joined several organisations at once and moved more or less freely between them. A general spirit of inquiry was as potent as a political belief, and in any case many people were by no means entirely clear what their political beliefs actually were. George Bernard Shaw joined the Fabians rather than the Marxist Social Democratic Federation, but he was also a member of Charlotte Wilson's Hampstead Historical Society which studied Marx in a French translation (there being none available in English). The Fabian Society could and did embrace socialists, Marxists, Liberals, feminists, free-thinkers and anarchists, and its ideas were very fluid.

Neither reformers nor revolutionaries necessarily thought of parliament as the best road to socialism or, indeed, to anything else

Much discussion was about the nature of the economic and social changes people wanted to see, but also about how that change was to be achieved. Neither reformers nor revolutionaries necessarily thought of parliament as the best road to socialism or, indeed, to anything else. Parliament and government had very little direct responsibility for the economy or for social change. The majority of the population was unable to vote, and various attempts to get working-class men elected had largely failed.

Charlotte Wilson and her allies saw the fledgling Fabian Society as ripe for an anarchist takeover. They got themselves onto the Fabian executive and proceeded to wear down opposition by the simple (and familiar) tactic of making even the smallest decision into seriously hard work all round. In 1886 Charlotte became the first woman to contribute over her own name to a Fabian pamphlet. It was called What Is Socialism? and had one section on collectivist socialism ('a strong central administration') and another, written by Charlotte, on anarchism ('individual initiative against that administration'). In a masterly piece of Fabian fence-sitting, the editorial introduction explained that: "The majority of English socialists are not committed to either, but only tend more or less unconsciously in one or other direction."

A general election at the end of 1885 was swiftly followed by another in July 1886. The Social Democratic Federation stood three candidates in the first one but was damaged by the revelation that it had funded two of them with secret payments from the Tory party. No socialist candidates stood in 1886. In much of the left, including the Fabian Society, a debate raged about the relationship between revolution and democracy and the role of electoral politics versus the potential for a workers' insurgency. Hence

the gathering at Anderton's Hotel.

Annie Besant, also a member of the Fabian executive, moved a resolution that the society should "organise themselves as a political party for the purpose of transferring into the hands of the whole working community full control over the soil and the means of production as well as over the production and distribution of wealth".

Charlotte's anarchists (in the person of William Morris) moved an amendment which said that "whereas no parliamentary party can exist without compromise and concession … it would be a false step for socialists to attempt to take part in the parliamentary contest".

Sidney Webb attempted to keep order in the uproar which ensued, and eventually the amendment was defeated and Annie Besant's proposal passed by a large majority. Shortly afterwards the society set up the Fabian Parliamentary League and in 1900 became a co-founder of the Labour party, which was itself dedicated to the democratic and electoral road.

Charlotte Wilson soon ceased to be an active Fabian and focused on anarchism. Together with the Russian Prince Peter Kropotkin she founded and edited the anarchist paper Freedom, which is still published. But over the years her positioning changed, and she engaged with a number of women's organisations, including the militant but non-violent Women's Freedom League, and the Women's Industrial Council, which was a hub of research on women's working conditions. In 1906 she rejoined the Fabian Society, in 1908 she founded the Fabian Women's Group and in 1911 she was re-elected to the Fabian executive. In 1913 she and her friend Maud Pember Reeves produced Roundabout a Pound a Week, a highly influential piece of research on the impact of poverty on child health and mortality rates.

Charlotte Wilson's influence on the development of Fabian thinking cannot be underestimated, if only because in the end she and the faction she led failed. In the soup of political uncertainty of the 1880s people were prepared to consider every option, including violent revolution. Charlotte Wilson was disruptive and difficult, and her opinions were dangerous in a very real way. But she also forced the early Fabians to choose between dynamite and democracy; that they chose the latter enables the society now to occupy its unique place on the left of British politics. **F**

Nan Sloane is the author of The Women in the Room: Labour's Forgotten History, published by I B Tauris

A Fabian future

As she finishes her time as Fabian chair, *Kate Green* reflects on the challenges ahead

I END MY TERM as chair of the Fabian Society at a time of political turmoil unknown in my lifetime. The mood in parliament is anxious, uncertain and febrile, as MPs face the most important political decision most of us will ever be asked to take, and we are desperate to do so in the best interests of our constituents. But while Brexit dominates the Westminster scene, many more issues are having a day-to-day impact on the public. This morning, the first emails out of my postbag cover the appalling service on Northern Rail, long delays for referrals to children's mental health services, and road safety outside school gates.

While Brexit sucks in all political energy, families are under pressure and public services crumbling as the policy choices of the past decade come home to roost. The pain of austerity isn't all felt immediately – it is cumulative, chronic and its effects will persist many years into the future. But it's proving hard to find the space to deal with these challenges, when Brexit dominates the agenda. Compound that with the negative economic and fiscal effect Brexit will have, and it's hard to be optimistic.

Politics is struggling to respond to these pressures. Division and dissent threaten to translate into an angry, hateful, and potentially violent politics. Populism, the rise of the far right, and extremism create deep unease. Internationally, things are troubling too. Climate change, conflict, and consequent population shifts create great challenges – but there is little sign of the global leadership needed to tackle them.

For Labour, these trends more than validate the demand for new and radical solutions. Labour's vision of a different approach, with power and resources prioritised for the many not the few, has resonated with voters. But the electoral challenge faced by the party remains significant, particularly in the light of the division that's been caused by Brexit.

This is where the Fabian Society comes in. The development of imaginative, evidence-based and radical policy solutions, and pragmatic proposals for their implementation, have long been the hallmark of the Fabian approach. The past two years have been no exception. We have been pleased to support the Labour frontbench in helping to fill out the details of Labour's bold policy ideas, from the National Education Service to the Bach Commission on access to justice. I'm particularly proud of the future-facing focus of our flagship programmes on the changing nature of work, automation, and the future of childhood. Meanwhile, the importance of gaining power to deliver our policy goals has been the catalyst for new political research into how Labour wins among diverse and increasingly disparate groups of voters.

Times of uncertainty call for boldness and strong leadership, but they also demand careful and rigorous thinking. The Fabian Society, 134 years old this year, has a long history of proactive, innovative and ground-breaking work, based on the principles of equality and social justice that have withstood and sustained us through past crises. It was Fabians who helped to create the Labour party at the turn of the 20th century; Fabian founder Sydney Webb who was responsible for writing the party's constitution, including the famous Clause IV, as Europe emerged from the Great War; Webb and his wife Beatrice, along with William Beveridge, who designed the welfare state after the second world war.

Now the country stands once again at a crossroads, and Fabian thinking is needed more than ever. I'm confident and proud that the society will rise to the task and that out of the uncertainty of today, the Fabians will be instrumental in helping to build a peaceful, fairer, socialist future. **F**

Kate Green is the Labour MP for Stretford and Urmston

Listings

BIRMINGHAM & WEST MIDLANDS
Details and information from Luke John Davies at bhamfabians@gmail.com

BOURNEMOUTH & DISTRICT
25 January: Stephen Morgan MP
All meetings are at 7.30pm in the Friends Meeting House, Bournemouth BH5 1AH.
Contact Ian Taylor on 01202 396634 or taylorbournemouth@gmail for details

BRIGHTON & HOVE
22 February: Dr Erica Consterdine on immigration policy.
29 March: Prof Stephany Griffith-Jones on national development banks – international experience and relevance for the UK under a Labour government.
All meetings at 8pm at Friends Meeting House, Ship St, BN1 1AF
Contact secretary Ralph Bayley at ralphfbayley@gmail.com

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

CHISWICK AND WEST LONDON
Details of meetings from Alison Baker at a.m.baker@blueyonder.co.uk

COLCHESTER
20 December: Alex Mayer MEP on Brexit. Meetings in the Hexagonal Room, Quaker Meeting House, 6, Church St, Colchester. 7 for 7.30pm
21 February: Ria Bernard.
21 March: Cllr Tim Young on local politics. Details from Maurice Austin at maurice.austin@phonecoop.coop for details

COUNTY DURHAM
19 January: Andrezj Olechnowicz, Durham University on Labour and the reform of state institutions.
All meetings, 12.15–2pm at Lionmouth Rural Centre near Esh Winning DH7 9QE. £4 including lunch.
Details from Prof Alan Townsend 01388 746479

CROYDON & SUTTON
50 Waverley Avenue, Sutton SM1 3JY
Future speaker, Seb Dance MEP
RSVP and information from Emily Brothers – info@emilybrothers.com

DARTFORD & GRAVESHAM
For details of all meetings, contact Deborah Stoate at deborah.stoate@fabians.org.uk

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

FINCHLEY
The Blue Beetle, Hendon Lane, N3 1TR
Contact Mike Walsh on mike.walsh44@ntlworld.com for details

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

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

HAVERING
25 January. AGM and Lord Roy Kennedy
7.30pm at the Gallery Studio, Fairkytes Arts Centre, 51 Billet lane, Hornchurch
Contact David Marshall for details at haveringfabians@outlook.com

HORNSEY & WOOD GREEN
21 January: Vera Baird on gender justice.
25 March: Lisa Nandy MP on power and towns.
Details from Mark Cooke at hwgfabians@gmail.com

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

LEEDS
For details, contact Luke Hurst at luke.will.h@gmail.com

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

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

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

OXFORD
Regular meetings and events. Contact David Addison at admin@oxfordfabians.org.uk

PETERBOROUGH
11 January: Alex Mayer MEP on Brexit progress.
22 February: M J Ladha and Harmesh Lakenpaul on the empire – a view from the Raj.
22 March: Maria Exall on the role of trade unions in the 21st century.
All meetings at the Dragonfly Hotel, Thorpe Meadows PE3 6GA at 8.00
Details from Brian Keegan at brian@briankeegan.demon.co.uk

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

READING & DISTRICT
Details from Tony Skuse at tony@skuse.net

RUGBY
Details about future meetings at rugbyfabians@myphone.coop

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

SOUTH TYNESIDE
Details of meetings from Paul Freeman at southtynesidefabians@gmail.com

TONBRIDGE & TUNBRIDGE WELLS
Regular meetings. Contact Martin Clay at martin.clay@btinternet.com

YORK & DISTRICT
Details from Cynthia Collier at mike.collier@talktalk.ne

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 26 January 2019
2pm–5pm.
Scottish Fabians AGM and panel debate: 20 years on – has devolution failed?
Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh

Tuesday 9 July 2019
Annual House of Commons meeting and House of Lords tea

FABIAN QUIZ

LAST DAYS IN OLD EUROPE
Richard Bassett

The final decade of the Cold War, through the eyes of a laconic and elegant observer.

In 1979 Richard Bassett set out on a series of adventures and encounters in central Europe which allowed him to search for the traces of the cosmopolitan old Hapsburg lands and gave him a ringside seat at the fall of another ancien regime, that of communist rule. From Trieste to Prague and Vienna to Warsaw, fading aristocrats, charming gangsters, fractious diplomats and glamorous informants provided him with an unexpected counterpoint to the austerities of life on either side of the Iron Curtain, first as a professional musician and then as a foreign correspondent.

The book shows us familiar events and places from unusual vantage points: dilapidated mansions and boarding-houses, train carriages and cafes, where the game of espionage between east and west is often set. There are unexpected encounters with Shirley Temple, Fitzroy Maclean, Lech Walesa and the last Empress of Austria. Bassett finds himself at the funeral of King Nicola of Montenegro in Cetinje, plays bridge with the last man alive to have been decorated by the Austrian Emperor Franz-Josef and watches the KGB representative in Prague bestowing the last rites on the Soviet empire in Europe.

Music and painting, architecture and landscape, food and wine, friendship and history run through the book. The author is lucky, observant and leans romantically towards the values of an older age. He brilliantly conjures the time, the people he meets, and Mitteleuropa in one of the pivotal decades of its history.

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

What was the so-called Velvet Revolution?

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

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

ANSWERS MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN FRIDAY 1 FEBRUARY 2019

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