

FABIAN REVIEW

The quarterly magazine of the Fabian Society

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GAINING GROUND

*Building an electoral coalition for a Labour victory with Jane Green and
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Angela Rayner MP on the future of work **p10** / Margaret Beckett on her life in politics **p20***

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FABIAN REVIEW

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

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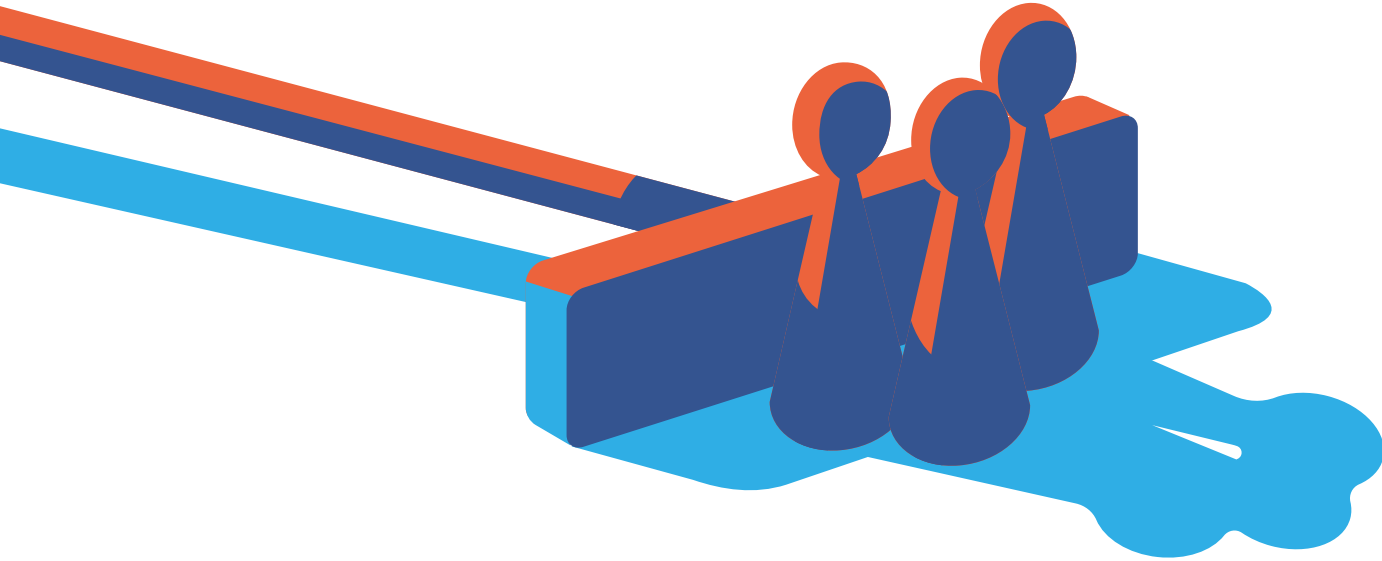
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Change and renewal

With the demise of Boris Johnson, the contrast between the two parties will no longer be on character. It will have to be on content, writes *Andrew Harrop*

THE DEMISE OF Boris Johnson is a vital turning point for British public life. The prime minister was not just corrupt but corrupting. He debased the conduct of government and the institutional life of the country. It will take years to recover. But the UK can now turn its back on dishonest, Trump-inspired populism.

The way forward for the left is far from clear however. Johnson had become the Labour party's best friend. Sleaze and scandal were repelling millions of the prime minister's former admirers and the popularity of the Conservatives had tanked.

A new Tory leader will be a different prospect for Labour. Although the runners and riders are hardly inspiring, when Conservative governments switch prime ministers, they usually win the next election. The challenge for Labour is to convince swing voters that a new Tory PM is not all the change they need.

Labour will seek to taint every Conservative with guilt by association. The extent to which the party can do that will depend on the candidate the Tories pick. But it will be a challenge to keep minds fixed on this sorry time. After all the parliament has two and a half years still to run. And the better Labour does, the more likely we are to see a full five-year term.

The good news is that Labour's revival hasn't just been down to Boris Johnson. Keir Starmer's success in decontaminating his party is why voters are less scared of dropping the Conservatives. This therefore helps explain Labour's own progress, the resurgence of the Liberal Democrats, and why people are once again willing to vote tactically.

Now, with Johnson gone, the contrast between Labour and the Conservatives is unlikely to be on conduct and character. It will have to be on content. Starmer must paint the Tory party, onto its fourth

prime minister in a dozen years, as the failing status quo and Labour as the party of change and renewal.

That will mean doing much better at convincing voters that the UK's manifold problems are not acts of God but the product of 12 years of Conservative misrule: costs are spiralling, average real wages are lower than 15 years ago and the NHS is on its knees. People need to believe that the Conservatives are to blame, and that a change in government will make the difference.

Labour must offer a bold alternative – on living standards, public services, job security and climate change. Differentiation on policy – clear red water – is essential to build Labour's electoral coalition. In particular, the party must convince low-income voters it has answers to the economic insecurities and failing public services that blight their lives.

But Labour must also provide reassurance and security to older, more settled voters. After successive Tory administrations have done such harm, another Tory prime minister should feel like the risky option and Labour the safe pair of hands. To bring this to life, Labour needs a compelling plan to grow the economy and rebuild the public finances, both to deliver prosperity and pay for social renewal.

Therefore, the tens of billions of pounds required to build a genuine alternative should mainly come from faster growth. And, before that growth comes, the costed policies in Labour's next manifesto will have to be small-scale and symbolic – though the party must be clear they are the start of its ambitions not the end.

These have been momentous weeks and Johnson's departure is a huge relief. But the reality remains: only a Labour government can deliver the prosperity, security and ecological transition we so badly need. ■

Shortcuts



PAYING THE PRICE

Only systemic solutions will address the household debt crisis—*Heidi Chow*

No one should be forced into debt just to make ends meet. Yet in the face of soaring living costs almost half of the adult population are either in debt or fear they soon will be. As energy, food and housing costs surge, we are seeing credit card borrowing at record levels – an indication that households struggling to pay the bills are turning to expensive loans or credit cards to cope. The problem is even worse for people on low incomes – more than a third are indebted and spend an average of 40 per cent of their monthly income on debt repayments. These are serious warning signs of a household debt catastrophe that is spiralling out of control.

Household debt was already on the rise before the pandemic but was accelerated by the economy being in lockdown, with at least 8.5 million people in debt arrears or finding their repayments a heavy financial burden in 2020 and an estimated additional 1.3 million people facing the same in 2021.

This is not just a financial problem: over-indebtedness has serious, long-term social consequences such as relationship breakdown and poor health including mental health and stress. Unsustainable debt levels affect employability, reduce productivity at work and can affect the wellbeing of children as well as lead to homelessness. The estimated annual cost of over-indebtedness to the taxpayer is at least £9.7bn. And, since carers, parents, women, renters, people with disabilities and Black and minority ethnic households are disproportionately affected, debt also has a multiplier effect in exacerbating existing inequalities.

The social and economic costs of debt are too high to ignore and yet

the lack of action by the government is stark. Debt is often seen as an individual problem created by financial mismanagement or excessive spending. But even money saving expert Martin Lewis has confessed that he is out of tools for people who are struggling and that political intervention is needed.

The household debt crisis is neither an accident nor a moral failing on the part of individuals. Instead it is the product of deliberate policies that have created an economy based on job insecurity and low wages while years of austerity have eroded the social safety net. This model has failed us spectacularly and enabled harmful debt to be used as an acceptable solution to plug the gap. So it is no surprise that in the face of unexpected crises such as ill-health, relationship breakdown or job loss, households are plunged into debt distress. As US debt activist Astra Taylor summarises: “Most people are not in debt because they live beyond their means; they are in debt because they have been denied the means to live.”

Debt needs to be seen as a systemic problem so that we can deploy systemic solutions. These involve improving the welfare system, boosting incomes and job security through stronger labour rights and guaranteeing decent incomes. But we also need to address the unfairness that is built into the debt system itself.

Every day debts are written off by banks and other lenders and sold onto the secondary debt market at rock-bottom prices – often for pennies in the pound. Secondary debt collectors can profit handsomely from purchasing cheap debt and then collecting the full face value of the debt though debt advice services using an inbuilt commission-based system. This is normally collected for a period of up to 20 years, essentially keeping a person trapped in prolonged debt, poverty and hardship – for a debt that has been written off by the original lender.

Government intervention in the form of a fair debt write-down would help break this debt trap. The government could buy up debts on the secondary debt market and then offer a debt write-down for people struggling with problem debt. This would transfer the benefit of the write-down, that has already taken place, to the people who need it most. At a time when mountains

of debt have been taken on to cope with the pandemic and soaring living costs, a fair debt write-down would alleviate the worst social impacts of problem debt while offering people the opportunity to reset their finances and rebuild their lives.

The severity of the debt crisis requires government intervention and systemic solutions. The cost of living crisis is essentially a crisis of chronic low incomes that are failing to keep up with rising prices. And with no effective government action anywhere in sight, debt is being used to bridge the gap. It is dangerous because debt is often used to exploit, impoverish and extract. We must act to help end the catastrophic debt crisis that is engulfing households up and down the country. **F**

Heidi Chow is executive director of Debt Justice



THE BIG PLEDGE

We need a commitment from Labour to end the need for food banks—*Tom Pollard*

Most of us intuitively feel that food banks should not need to exist in a country as wealthy as ours. Yet over the last eight years provision of emergency food parcels has doubled. Reducing the need for food aid could prove both a popular ambition and a tangible measure of progress for the next Labour government. However, it would require the party to face down its fears about arguing for significant investment in the social security system.

I spent the end of last year talking to people using food banks about the circumstances that had led them there, for a report with the Independent Food Aid Network and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Many had reached the breaking point of initially seeking food aid due to a crisis, such as losing a job, or experiencing an error or delay with their benefits. However,

they had often continued to need support because they could not make ends meet on the benefits they received.

People I spoke to on universal credit had just seen the end of the £20-a-week Covid-19 uplift, but many suggested it would take an uplift at least twice this size for them to be able to comfortably cover their basic costs. Since then, benefits have been losing their real-terms value – they were only uprated by 3.1 per cent in April while inflation has exceeded 9 per cent. The extra one-off payments announced by the ex-chancellor, Rishi Sunak, in May will help to ease the pain but are only a temporary fix.

There are, of course, wider factors contributing to the demand for food aid that Labour should look to address, particularly around low pay and insecure work. Support from local authorities and the third sector has been hollowed out by a decade of cuts.

Cutting the five-week wait for universal credit and moving away from a system of punitive benefit sanctions would also make a significant impact. But with unemployment benefits at their lowest real-terms value since the early 1990s, the central question of the adequacy of social security will have to be addressed.

Labour is understandably wary of making major spending commitments up to two years out from the next general election, particularly around an issue as politically contentious as benefit rates. However, a headline commitment to end the need for food banks would be harder for the Conservatives to attack and more likely to inspire public support. It would also provide a solid foundation for a debate about whether the support people get is adequate.

Ultimately, the only way to eliminate the need for food banks is to ensure that no one is allowed to fall below a level of income

that leaves them unable to afford food. The Fabians' *Going with the Grain* report last year found that almost 75 per cent of people agree that benefits should cover more than just very basic food and shelter. The more divisive question is whether people believe current rates are sufficient to do so.

Labour could try to defer and defuse this question by proposing an independent body to recommend benefit rates that ensure people can meet their basic needs. Building on the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's 'minimum income standards' work, this body could use deliberative approaches to foster public engagement and bolster the perceived legitimacy of the recommendations it makes.

But ensuring benefits are adequate is just half of the equation. Many people are not currently receiving the support they are eligible for, because they are not aware it is available or are reluctant to claim it. Labour should explore how it could better encourage take-up of benefits, in collaboration with local authorities and the third sector, and even look to automate claims where possible.

In addition, a statutory duty on all public bodies to help protect people from destitution, as well as being symbolically powerful, could make it clear that this is a shared responsibility of fundamental importance. A 'right to food' could also provide a basis to challenge decisions and actions (or inaction) that contribute to food insecurity.

These kinds of systemic objectives and policies have the potential to reframe the way the public understands and perceives poverty, by shifting the focus away from individual responsibility. They would also make it harder for subsequent governments to backslide on the progress the next Labour government is able to make.

Labour needs to find ways to change the terms of the political debate around

poverty in order to open the door to more transformational change. A commitment to end the need for food banks, backed up with bold and innovative policy ideas, could help the party to achieve this. **F**

Tom Pollard is an independent researcher on mental health, poverty and social security. He also works part-time in the NHS as a mental health social worker. He previously worked at Mind and on secondment at the Department for Work and Pensions



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Farmers, factories and families need a Labour government—
Jim McMahon MP

As the Shadow Secretary of State responsible for food security, I hear about the impact of the cost of living crisis every day. Farms, factories, and family dinner tables are living with the consequences and are desperately worried about spiralling costs and rocketing bills.

I am proud of British farmers and producers who have built their reputation for delivering quality and safeguarding high standards. We politicians must recognise that it is our job to stand up for working people and offer solutions. My exchanges with the government in the House of Commons have shown that we have a government that is out of ideas and not grounded in the real world. At every turn the Tories have been slow to react and late to the party (unless it happened to be in Downing Street).

Our food system still largely delivers daily miracles, despite the chaotic mess that the government has created. We have a 'perfect storm' of a funding arrangement for farmers that neglects the work they do. They have been hit by the supply chain crisis and the Covid-19 crisis – and now the Ukraine conflict is posing further challenges to a framework that was already at breaking point.

Farmers from every corner of the country tell me that the government's seasonal workers scheme is a barrier that prevents



them from recruiting the workers they need to produce and deliver their products.

Because of the failure to plan, customs issues have frustrated business and shortages of crop pickers, meat factory workers and lorry drivers have brought chaos to our supply chains. Crops are going to waste, supermarket shelves have gaps, we have had the CO₂, fuel and fertiliser crises, and the shocking cull of 35,000 healthy pigs.

Nobody voted for food to be left rotting in the fields. Nobody voted for higher prices. Nobody voted for pigs to be culled unnecessarily.

And the part that sickens me the most is whilst food goes to waste, two million adults in the UK are having to skip meals every day.

This is a reflection of a government that is completely out of touch and out of ideas. Unfortunately, it is hardworking families that are paying the price. But it does not have to be this way.

'Get Brexit done' is symbolic of a government that does slogans well but fails to deliver pragmatic solutions to the challenges our country face.

Government inaction threatens to plunge us into a worsening fertiliser shortage crisis and is a pertinent example. There are two major fertiliser plants in the UK, one is currently at 30 per cent capacity and the other has closed because it is now unprofitable. So why isn't the government working around the clock with industry, to deliver pragmatic solutions?

When the Tories have piped up, it has made things worse. They cut universal credit, raised national insurance, and we are now hurtling towards stagflation.

The Queen's speech was an opportunity to take meaningful action on the cost of living crisis. Yet there was nothing.

The government has finally announced their much-delayed national food 'strategy'; but the biggest story was how little was in there.

As Shadow Secretary of State and chair of the Cooperative party, I am proud that food justice has always been fundamental to our collective movements. Our campaign has highlighted that this government signed up to the UN Sustainable Development Goal 2 which aims to end hunger and achieve food security by 2030.

Yet ensuring access to a healthy diet does not feature at all in the government's levelling up agenda. You can't level up on an empty stomach.

Labour's plan to tackle the cost of living crisis would put money back in people's

pockets. We would introduce a windfall tax on oil and gas producers, saving working families up to £600 on their energy bills. We would build up the UK's energy security and keep costs down long-term. We would insulate every home that needs it, saving households £400 every year.

An energetic Labour government will back farmers in ensuring that Britain continues as a beacon for quality food, high standards, ethical treatment of animals, lower carbon production and environmental protections, rather than a race to the bottom in slashing safeguards.

We would buy, sell and make more in Britain, investing in rural productivity, cutting carbon, and restoring our natural environment. What we need is a government that will face outwards, that brings together farmers, manufacturing groups, and charities in a cross-departmental group to determine measures to face the challenges together. **F**

Jim McMahon is the Labour MP for Oldham West and Royton and Shadow Secretary of State for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs



POWERING AHEAD

The Ukraine conflict has shown the urgency of reducing our reliance on fossil fuels—*Margaret Welsh*

The UK should drill 'every last drop' of North Sea oil. Onshore wind turbines are 'eyesores'. We should remain 'open-minded' about fracking. Those were among the statements from government ministers in the last few months. Far from a proper plan to replace our Russian fuel imports and bring down energy bills once and for all, the current crisis seems to be locking in the UK's reliance on fossil fuels.

Right now we are living at the centre of multiple upheavals. The average UK family has had to find 54 per cent more money in their pockets to pay their energy bills from April. The cost of everyday essentials including food and heating has increased as a result of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. The invasion of Ukraine has been

bankrolled by massive exports of Russian oil and gas, revenues from which made up nearly half of the country's federal budget last year. At the same time, the fossil fuels funding Vladimir Putin's war machine are worsening the climate crisis. The latest report this April from the International Panel on Climate Change said that global greenhouse gas emissions must peak well before 2025 if we want to avoid climate disaster.

Collectively, these crises should point us towards building a world where we can afford to live – and our lives aren't powered by fuels which fund wars and increase floods, heatwaves and storms from the UK to India. Yet the spring statement from ex-chancellor Rishi Sunak ushered in the biggest drop in living standards since the 1950s. The New Economics Foundation has found that 34 per cent of the UK population – that's 23.5 million people – will be living in households unable to afford life's essentials this year.

In April, the government published an energy security strategy which was supposed to protect Brits from international price volatility and reduce imports of oil and gas. The plans include some big boosts for offshore wind and nuclear energy, but were criticised by the government's own advisors for failing to allow more cheap onshore wind farms or upgrade our buildings so they are cheaper to heat. Instead, the government announced plans for new oil and gas extraction in the North Sea and promised to remain 'open-minded' about fracking.

Climate deniers and delayers have wasted no time smelling change in the wind and have mobilised to try and make the climate crisis the new culture war frontline. The likes of Nigel Farage and Laurence Fox (who have received funding from oil and gas investors) are calling for a public referendum on net zero, while outfits like the climate science denial group Net Zero Watch and the Net Zero Scrutiny Group, formed by a few backbench Tory MPs, are calling for more fossil fuel extraction and the return of fracking to the UK.

It is frightening to see these crises being used to roll back progress on clean, green energy. Arguments which mainstream politics had considered settled years ago – that fracking is too dangerous and unpopular to be pursued in the UK and that the UK needs to cut its carbon emissions down to near zero in the next few decades – are being relitigated, prompted by fossil fuel interests. With Boris Johnson resigning as prime minister and an uncertain future for the Conservative party, it feels like everything is up for grabs.

Opposition parties are pushing for better solutions. Alongside the Liberal Democrats, Labour has proposed a windfall tax on fossil fuel companies raking in billions from soaring prices. This money could be used to stop high energy prices being passed on to consumers. Crucially, Labour has announced plans to insulate 19 million homes by 2030, with 2 million insulated in the first year of government. NEF has found that a mass home retrofit project like this would save families on average at least £345 a year on their energy bills. It would mean everyone can make sure their home is well-insulated and heated by clean, green energy – whether they rent a flat or own a castle.

But upgrading our homes can't be done instantaneously, so we need a more immediate solution. And the best way of efficiently getting money to those who need it is our existing benefits system. NEF is proposing guaranteeing everyone in the UK a living income, starting with restoring the £20 uplift to universal credit, reversing the cuts to social security since 2010, boosting all benefits in line with the latest inflation figures and automatically enrolling everyone onto the universal credit system so payments can be processed as soon as anyone becomes eligible.

With this, we can build an energy system which does not pollute our local communities or our atmosphere, which does not fund the autocrats' war machines and which guarantees everyone can keep their homes warm. **F**

Margaret Welsh is communications officer at the New Economics Foundation



LIFE SKILLS

Young people must be given the chance to flourish—
Alison McGovern MP

By any standards, the last two years have been brutal for young people.

Throughout the pandemic, students saw their bustling universities silenced and they then graduated into a jobs market which had



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seized up. Young people disproportionately work in sectors like retail and hospitality which were massively affected by lockdowns. According to the Resolution Foundation, the first year of the pandemic saw working young people three times as likely to leave employment as those aged over 25.

Typically, the economic consequences of the pandemic were worst for young people from poorer backgrounds, supporting what we heard about wealthier households' savings increasing as their spending declined.

Indeed, we know that the first stage of every career is critical. An early job loss can have profound and lasting effects on someone's lifetime earnings: Young people made redundant in recessions can face wage penalties of 13 to 21 per cent until their 42nd birthday.

You might reasonably expect that apprenticeships present an opportunity to get into work, but the number of young people starting apprenticeships each year dropped by more than 40 per cent between 2014/15 and 2020/21.

In recent years, young people have had more and more economic pressure piled on top of them – with stagnant wage growth, soaring house prices, unaffordable rent and now a cost of living crisis. Under the Tories, young people have seen their tuition fees trebled and their education maintenance allowance scrapped. It is no surprise that more than a third of 25-year-olds still live with their parents.

However, if you were to glance at the top-line employment figures, you might be forgiven for thinking that everything looked all right. Unemployment seems low, doesn't it?

Unfortunately, according to Tony Wilson, the director of the Institute for Employment Studies, we need to look a little closer at the fact that our labour market is plagued by economic inactivity – namely, people dropping out of the workforce altogether. Across the country, young people are responding to the economic uncertainty by sheltering in education.

After the great financial crisis, New Labour introduced a Future Jobs Fund to tackle the increase in youth unemployment. This programme – which in 2012 was estimated by the DWP to have resulted in “a net benefit to participants, their employers and society as a whole” – was cut prematurely by David Cameron (who had previously claimed to be ‘inspired’ by it).

In response to the pandemic, the government sought to copy Labour's success by implementing its Kickstart scheme which was based on the Future Jobs Fund. Kickstart aimed to get 250,000 young people into work but was largely administered by the DWP itself – whereas the Future Jobs Fund had been successfully managed by local authorities.

Unfortunately, barely half of the government's initial target was met, and the National Audit Office judged it as providing “limited assurance over the quality of work placements created by the scheme, or whether jobs created by the employers would have existed anyway”.

Young people in Britain are more skilled and more capable than at any point in our history. Yet one of our key productivity challenges is the fact that one in five workers is currently overskilled for their current job. This isn't to say that there's anything wrong with a graduate student

working in a café, but we need to ensure that every young worker has the chance to achieve and thrive. It can't be right that so many young people still feel the need to move to the South East to find the right job for them.

We have got sky-high vacancies at the moment, but the government is frankly unable to get the right people into the right jobs with the right wages. Jobcentres are too often places young people do not want to go any more, with an incompetent Department for Work and Pensions that desperately hopes our chronic economic inactivity problem will go away on its own.

In government, Labour will ensure more of our young people have the skills they need to succeed. We are determined that everyone will leave education ready for work and ready for life, with a particular focus on ensuring digital skills, careers guidance in every school, and compulsory work experience for every student.

What's more, Labour will reform the DWP, ensure that Jobcentres suit local workers and local areas, and boost prosperity and security for young people. This will help people achieve their ambitions and drive our economy forward.

Over the last two years, young people have taken another incredible hit to their lives and livelihoods in order to protect their families, neighbours and the country – we owe them a fantastic life in return. **F**

Alison McGovern is the Labour MP for Wirral South and a shadow employment minister



THREE VISIONS FOR SIX COUNTIES

Labour should rethink its attitude to organising in Northern Ireland—*Matthew Boyd*

From Northern Ireland's creation in 1921, its largest party had always been a unionist one. Then, on 5 May this year, the status quo was overturned. Unionists, divided by parties and Brexit, had failed to produce the single largest party in the Northern Ireland Assembly. Instead, Sinn Féin,

a republican party, took first place, and with it the privilege of nominating Northern Ireland's first minister should an executive be formed.

Notable too was the continued rise of the Alliance party, defined by its neither-unionist-nor-nationalist 'other' stance and liberal agenda. Riding the wave of change brought about by the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, Alliance straddles a middle ground. Drawing support from moderate unionists and nationalists, as well as from the growing numbers who eschew the traditional dichotomies of Northern Irish society, Alliance's success suggests that many in Northern Ireland aspire to a future free from division.

It remains commonplace to view Northern Ireland in contrasting halves: British versus Irish; Protestant versus Catholic; orange versus green. Many have sought to depict 5 May as a victory for nationalists to the detriment of unionists. The continued perpetuation of such clefs, aside from harming cross-community integration, ignores the shared experiences of many people, not least those who belong to trade unions.

Unions in Northern Ireland are a cross-community success story. In a population of 1.9 million people, some 250,000 are members of unions. Union density in Northern Ireland is higher than anywhere else in the British Isles, and Northern Irish trade unionists contribute millions to the coffers of their organisations every year. Nevertheless, members receive little in return from the political arm of their movement.

With this in mind – and with the need for the British Labour party to find new successes following the loss of many of its traditional strongholds – the time may have come for the labour movement to re-evaluate how it organises in Northern Ireland. One way of achieving this could be for British Labour to field official candidates. The infrastructure for British Labour success already exists: a Northern Ireland-wide body with constituency Labour party status boasts 3,000 members – more than any other registered party in Northern Ireland.

Despite the popularity of British Labour, the party's National Executive Committee (NEC) refuses to endorse candidates. This practice dates to 1913, when British Labour decided to forgo organising in Ireland at the behest of Irish Labour (which now organises exclusively in the Republic). More recently, British Labour has collaborated with the nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) in an increasingly anachronistic arrangement; the SDLP's vote

share has haemorrhaged, and until recently it was pursuing ties with centre-right Irish party Fianna Fáil.

The NEC should be open to the possibility of backing candidates in Northern Ireland. Whilst Northern Irish seats won't in themselves win British Labour a Westminster election, the prospect of finding any new pastures must be welcomed. Candidates are ready, with several linked to the Northern Irish 'CLP' having already stood. With official support, it is plausible that this group could make gains.

Whilst left-wing parties already exist in Northern Ireland, they are largely the preserve of the nationalist tradition; the SDLP and Sinn Féin struggle to win over left-leaning unionists.

Another option for representation could come through an agreement between the British and Irish Labour parties, emulating that of the UK's National Union of Students and the all-Ireland Union of Students in Ireland. Students in Northern Ireland have enjoyed simultaneous membership of both unions since 1972, alongside membership of a combined body that engages with politics on both sides of the Irish Sea.

Similar collaboration by Labour supporters would have cross-community appeal, and funding would be facilitated by the fact that many unions in Great Britain and Ireland are affiliated to both Labour parties. Furthermore, this model would provide homes for unionists and nationalists within a single, 'other' movement, though there would need to be safeguards to prevent factionalism.

A third option could be to form a local, independent Labour party. Northern Ireland has been without a local, cross-community Labour party since 1987, and although times have changed, this would remain a difficult endeavour. Attempts to found parties have floundered in the last decade, the centrist NI21 being one example.

Whichever path labour supporters in Northern Ireland choose to follow, they must make theirs a cross-community movement. Participants should be welcomed from both traditions, alongside those who don't subscribe to the old divisions: only by embracing common ground can the people of Northern Ireland move on. For 250,000 people, labour representation could be a start. **F**

Matthew Boyd is secretary of the GMB London Region Young Workers' Committee, and trade union liaison officer for the Chesham and Amersham CLP

Working future

From day one, a Labour government will strengthen workers' rights and undo the damage the Conservatives have inflicted on working people, writes *Angela Rayner MP*



Angela Rayner is deputy leader of the Labour party and Shadow Secretary of State for the Future of Work

THE LABOUR PARTY has a long and proud history of being the party not just *of* working people but *for* working people. People deserve high-quality, secure jobs, and our ambition to ensure a fair day's pay for a day's work is core to our values. Everyone deserves a job they can build a life on, and the security to be able to start a family as they so wish, no matter who they are or what job they do.

Work has a special status not just for fulfilment but as a source of self-esteem that brings agency and purpose, as my colleague Jon Cruddas MP explores in his latest book, *The Dignity of Labour*. But more than that, working people should be able to enjoy the fruits of their labour and balance work with life; to enjoy what academic Amelia Horgan calls in *Lost in Work* the "possibilities for human cooperation and joy" outside the work they do. We need bread, but we need some roses too.

Instead of an employment model that works for working people, the Conservative government has, over the last decade, presided over a race to the bottom hosted on the backs of working people. The rise of outsourcing, zero-hours contracts and bogus self-employment have driven down relative pay, standards and conditions across sectors of our whole economy. Our country has become trapped in a cycle of low growth, low pay, and high taxes.

Whether it is parents getting a late night text to tell them their working hours and tearing their hair out organising last-minute childcare to cover their shift; social care workers working two jobs who can't afford to take a break or get sick; or the bus driver who worked all through the pandemic but was fired and rehired on less money and longer hours – Britain under this Conservative government is not working for working people.

The fifth anniversary of the publication of the Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices, which was commissioned in response to the rise of the so-called 'gig economy', fell in June. But even the modest

53 recommendations – 51 of which were accepted by this government – are yet to be implemented. The employment legislation that promised to follow the EU withdrawal agreement three years ago, which ministers said would not only safeguard but enhance rights and protections, has not arrived.

With the confirmation in the recent Queen's speech that the government's Employment Bill has been shelved, a host of ministerial promises have fallen by the wayside: the introduction of a single enforcement body; action on tips and sick pay; the consultation on flexible working; paternity and maternity rights; unpaid carers' leave; redundancy protection for pregnant women; and of course, the promise to end the cruel practice of fire and rehire. A litany of broken promises that shows the extent to which this Conservative government has failed working people.

Boosting people's income is not just the right thing for them – it is the right thing for our economy. The fact is, right now people do not have money to spend in our shops, our businesses, our local economies – and high streets are suffering. It is contributing to the cost of living crisis.

Places that were once a source of great pride are now a source of great sadness as independent businesses are replaced with pawn shops or covered in plywood shutters. Under this government, the people that worked to build Britain have been forgotten – in towns up and down this country, people are working harder, paying more, but getting less, every year: frozen wages, widespread inequality, and increasing poverty. The people and places that once proudly powered Britain and made their contribution to our economy are being rewarded by low wages and insecure work: underpaid, underappreciated and undervalued.

Britain's insecure work epidemic is not just punishing workers and communities – it is starving the public finances too. Recent research from the Trades Union Congress (TUC) shows that insecure low-paid work

The people and places that once proudly powered Britain are being rewarded by low wages and insecure work

costs the Treasury £10bn a year in lost tax revenues and by pushing up social security payments. And that means less funding for our cash-strapped hospitals, care homes and schools. The self-defeating cycle harms us all and real change is needed.

That is why Labour has proposed a New Deal for Working People. Better pay would end the self-defeating low wage, low investment, and low productivity cycle that the country has been trapped in for the last decade.

We want fair pay in the world of work. Labour would introduce fair pay agreements with unions and employers, starting in social care. We also want to ensure we help sectors of the economy thrive. The Welsh Labour government has continued sectoral bargaining with agriculture, and this is being developed in several sectors in New Zealand by Jacinda Arden's Labour government. It is common in European countries such as Sweden and France too.

We are serious about spreading opportunity, prosperity and power across the country – and that means paying people a fair day's pay for a day's work. We know the importance of those jobs that have been underpaid and undervalued for too long and deserve a higher wage for their sector than the national minimum wage. This will also help with recruitment and retaining people and their skills for longer.

Under the Conservatives, work does not mean fairness anymore. And it does not mean security either. Labour will strengthen the protections afforded to all workers by banning zero-hours contracts; acting against bogus self-employment; and ending qualifying periods for basic rights, which leave working people waiting up to two years for basic protections. We will put an end to this arbitrary system, scrapping the qualifying time for basic rights, such as unfair dismissal, sick pay, and parental leave. With a Labour government, working people will have rights at work from day one.

Having been a single parent myself, I know only too well the challenges of trying to balance work with being a good mum. Running from work to the school gates, missing out on parents' evening. Rather than stacking the odds against working parents, Labour would deliver

stronger family-friendly rights. We will extend statutory maternity and paternity leave, introducing the right to bereavement leave and strengthening protections for pregnant women. Labour will ensure all workers have the right to flexible working as a default from day one.

This government's programme is also completely lacking in any plans to tackle the inequalities facing Black, Asian and minority ethnic people so visibly exposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Yet again the government has reneged on its promise to introduce ethnicity pay gap reporting, ignoring calls by the Confederation of British Industry and TUC. Labour will also act to close gender, disability – and ethnicity – pay gaps. Our country is riven by inequalities which Labour is focused on fixing – to ensure the working people who create our nation's wealth get their fair share of it.

Meanwhile the government has proposed a Procurement Bill that looks increasingly unworthy of the name. The government has failed to use its buying power to support British businesses. A Labour government would help British businesses win more government contracts using social, environmental and labour clauses in contract design. We would use public procurement to support good work. From good green jobs in tidal power and offshore wind, to fintech, media and film, we must grow modern industries to build a long-term economy that provides good jobs and is fit for the future.

Where the Conservatives scrapped their own Industrial Strategy Council, Labour will create an industrial strategy fit for the 21st century, built on an ethos of cooperation across the public and private sectors, employers and workers.

Investment, jobs and opportunities have not been evenly spread across the country. Many people have had to move many miles away to find decent opportunities to get on. Labour's mission is to create more and better jobs that are closer to home, so people have the real choices that they have been denied for far too long.

So many businesses play by the rules and try to do the right thing but are undercut by the unscrupulous. Many of them are small and medium-sized businesses that are the backbone of local and regional economies. They deserve better too. Deliveroo and GMB Union's recent groundbreaking agreement shows how innovation and a voice at work can go hand in hand. Many successful businesses already understand the value of trade unions in a modern economy. But restrictions on trade union activity are holding back living standards and the economy. Labour will update trade union legislation so it is fit for a modern economy.

The Conservatives have had 12 long years to make the changes our country desperately needs to secure our future. But they have failed. We have seen the watering down of workers' rights and rogue bosses like P&O take advantage of our lax rules while ministers stand idly by.

Labour's approach is to offer people real help right now and a vision for the future of work where working people enjoy dignity and where they are treated with respect.

This Conservative government has not got a plan – it has run out of ideas, it has run out of road and it has run out of time. Labour is ambitious for our country. We will build a Britain that works for working people. **F**





A new coalition

Tackling economic insecurity will be key to winning the support Labour needs if it is to form the next government, write *Jane Green* and *Roosmarijn de Geus*



*Jane Green is director of the Nuffield Politics Research Centre at the University of Oxford and a co-director of the British Election Study. Roosmarijn de Geus is lecturer in comparative politics at the University of Reading. Their new report *Red Wall, Red Herring? Economic Insecurity and Vote Intention in Britain* is now online*

ELECTORAL POLITICS HAS created new uncertainties for political parties since the Brexit vote, and those uncertainties will only increase now that the Conservatives are set to have a new leader. For Labour, the big uncertainty remains how to secure an electoral coalition that unites north and south, young and old, graduates and non-graduates. Economic security is a big part of the answer to resolving this conundrum.

For our new report, we looked at the relationship between age, education level and economic insecurity and their relationships to attitudes and voting behaviour, using British Election Study data from 2018 and 2019. Examining economic insecurity is especially useful because a focus on income and social class misrepresents the degree to which the Conservatives have been supported by economically secure people such as older voters who happen to have working-class backgrounds, lower incomes and lower education levels. Economic security helps us understand the likely voters who went to Labour in Wakefield in the recent by-election and the voters who supported the Liberal Democrats in Tiverton and Honiton.

Britain's older population – which tends to have lower levels of educational attainment and lower incomes – is, on average, the most economically secure group. The highest average economic insecurity exists among younger generations of non-graduates (which means women under 50 and men under 40): they are the people who have been least protected from globalisation and deindustrialisation and who are less likely to feel secure as a result of their prospects and family wealth. They are at risk of being the 'won't haves' in contrast to younger graduate 'will haves'.

We looked at the relationship between economic security and socially conservative attitudes to examine the idea of culturally conservative 'left behind' voters. Our research finds that overall it is not the most economically *insecure* who are most culturally conservative on average. Rather, it is the older, economically most *secure* people who are the most culturally conservative.

It has become common practice to assume that Labour lost Red Wall seats that were economically left behind and had high proportions of Leave voters, and that therefore these two components should form the basis of the party's

strategy to win the next election. Yet not all economically insecure voters are culturally conservative – and many Leave voters were economically secure. It is therefore a mistake to project characteristics of place (Red Wall seats) onto individual voters. Importantly, we find that the people at highest risk of economic insecurity live across the country, not only in the Red Wall, and a cross-country strategy is therefore required to gain the support of these voters.

Herein lie some valuable lessons for Labour on how the party can build an electoral coalition. That coalition could bring together the ‘will haves’ (economically secure younger graduates) and the ‘won’t haves’ (economically insecure younger non-graduates) with older generations who lose their economic security or experience a loss of economic security during the current cost of living crisis.

But to build this coalition, Labour must take note of four key insights:

1. A loss of economic security could be very damaging for the Conservatives

Economic insecurity represents a range of experiences. A person becomes more economically secure because they have multiple buffers to weather storms – like savings, assets and job or income security – and fewer economic stressors and outgoings.

The worse someone’s economic insecurity, the more they are likely to vote Labour in our data, and the better someone’s economic security, the more they are likely to vote Conservative. Around two-thirds of 2019 Conservative voters felt economically *secure* in 2018 (a proportion mirrored in the north west and the north east of England) whereas just over half of Labour’s 2019 voters felt economically *insecure* in 2018. Economically insecure voters likely drift to Labour because their values and interests align more closely with those of the party. And they are likely to have experienced the consequences of Conservative austerity politics and wider economic decline – and therefore to seek an alternative.

This suggests that a focus on someone’s economic security – not just their income but their ability to buy a home, their job security, their ability to feel financially safe and stable, their ability to keep hold of their savings and pay their bills – is extremely important for Labour. All of these things are in jeopardy now because of the current economic climate and the effects of the pandemic.

It is noteworthy that women report higher levels of economic insecurity than men, and ethnic minority communities experience higher levels of insecurity than white Britons. These are two key electoral groups for Labour and it emphasises the need for the party to take seriously their

economic concerns and to identify policies that would address their experiences.

The most economically secure older voters have – in large numbers – been voting Conservative (and they are more likely to turn out to vote as well). But an appeal to the more *economically insecure* older voters in Britain could be one of the most obvious sources of support for the Labour party in opposition in a time of economic crisis, as well as for younger generations of both graduates and non-graduates who are now really feeling the pinch.

2. The education divide in voting behaviour is not all about values. For younger generations the education divide is also an economic divide

Since 2015, the relationship between education and age and voting behaviour in Britain has sharpened significantly. Labour is supported by more young people than older people and more graduates than non-graduates.

It is also true that our urban areas are comprised of more young, graduate voters and those on higher incomes. Hence Labour’s vote has become more concentrated in cities, and this concentration is inefficient in Britain’s majoritarian electoral system (which is also true for the Democrats in the United States).

The education and age divide has been explained by the values-differences between graduates and non-graduates and older and younger generations. Younger graduates tend to be more liberal, pro-immigration and pro-Remain, and older non-graduates tend to be more small-c conservative, hostile to immigration and pro-Leave. These ‘second dimension’ or ‘culture war’ issues then purportedly act as a way to embed the support of older non-graduates for the Conservatives and may trap Labour in competition with other liberal, green, progressive parties, or offer the promise of an ever-increasing electoral base as a generation of younger graduates becomes a larger and larger electoral group.

But the education divide is also an economic divide, although only for younger generations – women under 50 and men under 40. This is because of the economic insurance enjoyed by older generations of graduates and non-graduates alike, and also because of the economic difficulties experienced by younger generations of non-graduates in particular. Our evidence comes from 2018 and the economic experiences of younger generations has very likely become much more extreme since then.

If Labour wants to appeal to younger generations, it should support their economic security. And if it wants to appeal to future Conservative voters – those younger non-graduates who are more culturally conservative or pro-Leave than younger graduates – it can do this

Women report higher levels of economic insecurity than men and ethnic minority communities experience higher levels of insecurity than white Britons

by promising to bolster and support their economic prospects now.

There is also a stark warning here. While younger non-graduates are more economically insecure and therefore may be persuaded to support Labour, younger graduates are more economically secure, and more likely on this basis to shift their support to the Conservatives (and be less supportive of redistributive politics) in the future. Labour cannot just count on its graduate voters sticking with more progressive politics over their life course. It has to find an appeal to both the ‘won’t haves’ and also the ‘will haves’.

3. A gap between the ‘will haves’ and ‘won’t haves’ could grow – which may be extremely important for elections

A new type of economic gap may be opening up in British society. We cannot know this for sure as we cannot (yet) look back in time with sufficient confidence to know whether the ‘will haves’ and ‘won’t haves’ looked the same in past decades. And the future is partially up to policymakers.

But we know that the big economic gains of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s predominantly benefited previous generations of non-graduates, simply because non-graduates then represented the largest part of the population. And we know that the expansion of university access has replicated economic inequalities to a substantial degree. Graduates tend to come from wealthier families and enjoy subsequent income returns, potentially leaving non-graduates increasingly behind in an economy that rewards or requires a degree, that has becoming increasingly reliant on the knowledge economy, and that has seen deindustrialisation and automation reducing the supply of non-graduate secure work.

That does not have to be the case and a focus on a skills agenda would be a good way to address these issues. But if it isn’t addressed sufficiently, the growing economic gap between graduates and non-graduates could be extremely damaging in the future. Non-graduates would be economically left behind, suffer worse ‘social status’, and be in a minority in contrast to graduates who may (eventually) benefit from greater levels of parental wealth. This could be a source of societal, economic and political polarisation to come, and is something that any policymaker with an eye on the future should be alert to.

For the left this means offering policies that will provide greater upward social mobility for young people across the board, but with a particular focus on younger non-graduates and also the proportion of younger graduates who become left behind.

A university degree is one route, but with increasing numbers going to university, divisions within this group of graduates will appear, largely depending on parental wealth but also dependent on different graduate income returns and the affordability of housing. Compared to previous generations, many younger people do not have the long-term perspective of homeownership and a secure pension ahead of them, although younger renting graduates expect to buy homes at higher rates in our data than younger non-graduates who are renting. A centre-left government could offer voters the security

of a social safety net, but should also offer the potential of a more equitable future in order to attract younger generations and to avoid a growing economic rift based on education divides.

4. Younger generations of non-graduates are a key electoral group

Women under 50 and men under 40 who are non-graduates are particularly interesting because these are the individuals who are most aggrieved economically – and whose economic grievances most closely match with their cultural attitudes and concerns. It cannot be said that someone who is very economically secure but culturally conservative is hostile to immigration because of their own economic insecurity (though they may have local, regional or inter-generational economic concerns). But for younger non-graduates, concerns about immigration and hopes for Brexit could be tied to their economic worries. Moreover, these economic worries tend to be extreme. We found the highest levels of needing to borrow money for essentials, and of not being able to cover an emergency expense among younger non-graduates. And this was in 2018, before both the pandemic and the current cost of living squeeze.

These individuals are ‘cross-pressured’. On Brexit and immigration they might be pulled towards the Conservatives. On the basis of economics, they might be pulled towards Labour. The same cannot be said to be true for older economically secure voters. The latter have two reasons to currently vote Conservative: their economic security and their views on Brexit.

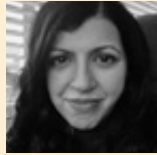
Importantly, the younger non-graduates we identify live in all parts of the country. While there has been much focus on where older non-graduates live and also where younger graduates live, we looked at the distribution of younger non-graduates and found high proportions in Labour constituencies in cities, in South Wales, and in a swathe of Conservative gains and also Conservative-Labour key marginals. These individuals have been more likely to be non-voters in recent elections, but that doesn’t mean they will always be. They may have turned out in relatively higher numbers in the EU referendum. And the fact that they are the economically and politically left behind means they could now be the most important group to win over.

Our research suggests that the electoral focus on the Red Wall is something of a red herring – or at least how it has been interpreted since analyst James Kanagasooriam first coined the phrase before the last election to highlight the areas of the country where the Conservative vote, based on demographics including home ownership, could have been higher. Those subsequent interpretations have hidden the fact that the group that is most strongly ‘left behind’ is made up of younger non-graduates who live across the country, not just in the Red Wall.

Economic insecurity is crucial in determining vote choice, and Labour has a chance of building a winning electoral coalition across generations – between younger non-graduates and graduates – and across the country, by focusing its attention on providing economic security in the face of a cost of living crisis. This is where Labour’s policy priorities must surely lie. **F**

Reaching out

With the right strategy rooted in its values, Labour can win the British Asian vote back from the Conservatives. *Shalini Sharma* explains



Shalini Sharma is senior lecturer in South Asian history at Keele University

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS AFTER South Asia freed itself from British colonialism, the government is back in the region coveting a new era of trade agreements post-Brexit. India, and to a lesser extent Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, are seen by Britain as natural partners, bound to this country by vestigial ties of history. They still belong to the same club, after all: the Commonwealth.

Now, after a series of resignations, Boris Johnson is stepping down as prime minister. But his cabinet did seem more at ease with the British South Asian community at home than previous prime ministers. Up until Rishi Sunak's resignation, for the first time in British history two of the three biggest ministerial portfolios – the Home Office and the Treasury – were held by politicians of South Asian heritage, whilst three more served in the cabinet. And British Asians voted disproportionately in favour of Brexit in 2016. Saffron shades blend nicely with blue rinse Conservatism.

That may change come the next general election. Two out of Labour's top 10 target seats have significant South Asian populations – Bolton North East and Chipping Barnet. Yet equally, there are seats such as Walsall South and Ilford North, where historic South Asian support for Labour looks vulnerable.

The UK government is currently negotiating a trade deal with India – but it needs to tread carefully. Democracy in South Asia has taken a battering. The capitulation of Imran Khan in Pakistan to his overseers in the army; the hard-man authoritarianism of Narendra Modi in India; state-sponsored communal violence in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh; and Burma in a state of civil war mean we have seen the region tumbling down the world rankings of free states.

In particular, the health of the Indian polity – once a source of stability in the region, as well as the UK's largest trading partner there – demands our attention. Expert opinion is increasingly scathing about India's democratic credentials. Freedom House categorises India as 'partly free'. V-Dem reports that India has become an 'electoral autocracy', while the Democracy Index compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit has labelled India as a 'flawed democracy'.

As these indices suggest, India is falling behind in several important areas: the autonomy of the media; the independence of the Lok Sabha (parliament); everyday accountability in India's vast bureaucracy; the judicial and police system; the preservations and human rights; and, perhaps most concerning of all, the treatment of minority communities, namely Muslims, Dalits and Christians.

The Labour party ignores what is happening now in South Asia at its peril. True, pointed questions have been asked in parliament whether the UK should be shaking hands with an Indian government that is busy intern-ing its opponents, banning the internet in Kashmir, and expelling humanitarian organisations such as Amnesty International. However, blithe reassurances are trotted out.

Boris Johnson and Liz Truss' cheerleaders argued that trade with India will itself lead to improved human rights. Some politicians even seem prepared to explain away the persecution of Indian Muslims. Even Labour veterans get caught up in the knee-jerk defence of India's supposedly secular constitution.

Labour must not become complicit in this complacency on human rights abuse in South Asia. Instead, the party should return to its traditions of pursuing an 'ethical' foreign policy of the kind set out by Robin Cook in the early days of New Labour. It must do more than just pay lip service to the manifesto commitment to protecting British workers as well as human rights and democracy across the globe. There needs to be ethical oversight on every trade deal undertaken in the post-Brexit world, including those with 'old' friends like India.

The Labour party must also become even more inclusive in reaching out to British Asians. The Tories should not be allowed to take saffron Conservatism for granted. A recent report by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace reveals that British Asian voters in swing constituencies are not so impressed by UK-India trade deals. What they want is recognition for their contribution to British society. At present, Labour has a handful of women of South Asian heritage in its shadow cabinet, but they are not especially prominent. Surely more can be elevated from the backbenches? Labour is after all the party with the largest number of MPs from ethnic minority backgrounds.

But to truly stand a chance of winning the next general election, Labour needs to confront how it has lost ground as the party of anti-racism in the wake of the antisemitism scandal of the Corbyn era. This has affected the image of the party amongst all ethnic minorities, including the core communities of British South Asians. A Labour party that is consistent in its own anti-racism can be a true friend of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and elsewhere. At the moment, it is all too easy for defenders of authoritarianism in South Asia to point to racial injustice and inequality in the west.

Post-Brexit trade deals in South Asia do not need to be a return to the bad old days of Empire, with human rights low on the agenda. Labour has much to be proud of in how it helped free the countries of South Asia from colonialism in the 20th century. Now, 75 years later and with Johnson out, the party can become a critical friend of the region once more, restoring its reputation overseas and reaping the benefits at the next general election. **F**

Pincer movements

The recent by-elections suggest that if the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats commit to tactical voting, they can defeat the Tories at the next general election. *Neal Lawson* explains



Neal Lawson is executive director of Compass, which is campaigning for a progressive alliance

LABOUR FACES A historic dilemma. Does it go all guns blazing for an outright win at the next election or does it accept and promote the need for tactical voting – crucially and inevitably as a two-way thing? As the director of Compass, I’m already on the record arguing for the latter. But let me make the case anew, not just for reluctant tactical votes but for a fresh form of social and democratic politics.

There are two arguments to be had: instrumental and intrinsic. Let’s start with the electoral case. To win a majority in parliament of just one, Labour needs to gain 124 seats. That would be equivalent to a uniform swing to Labour of 10.52 per cent, larger than in the Labour landslides of 1997 and 1945. Discounting Scottish seats leaves Labour needing an unprecedented uniform swing of 13.8 per cent and winning all 124 seats would require constituency swings as high as 15 per cent. When you add in the impending boundary changes giving the Tories 10 to 13 more seats and the effects of voter ID, the incline gets very steep.

And don’t forget, in 2019, the number of votes for the Brexit party was larger than Labour’s majority in 27 seats – places like Dagenham and Rainham, Doncaster North and Central, Houghton and Sunderland South.

As I write, after ‘partygate’, with a cost of living crisis and a disgraced prime minister now out the door, Labour could be doing better in the polls. We have yet to see who will lead the Conservatives into the next election. But parties that change their leader in office – like with John Major in 1990 or Johnson in 2019 – usually go on to win as the nation feels like ‘the change’ has happened.

Can Labour take the risk of going it alone again, especially when the Conservatives’ 80-seat majority can be lost on a uniform swing of only 3.18 per cent? In part this is because the Liberal Democrats came second in

80 Conservative seats in 2019, of which 10 would require a constituency swing of less than 3 per cent to flip.

We recently saw big tactical vote and campaigning wins in the Wakefield and Tiverton and Honiton by-elections. There was clearly some sort of informal agreement nationally between Labour and the Lib Dems not to campaign hard in the seat where the other was best placed to win – and it worked. As ever, people are even further ahead of the parties in terms of voting tactically.

The Tories reacted strongly to the threat they see from tactical voting, with Sajid Javid in the Daily Mail two days after the by-elections demanding Keir Starmer and Ed Davey come clean over any pact. Unfortunately this too worked, as then David Lammy toured the TV studios the next day and said there was not a pact and proportional representation would probably not be in the Labour manifesto. So Labour has ended up running away from the two things the Tories fear most because it would be the end of them: pacts and PR.

Lammy also claimed Labour was on course for a ‘comfortable majority’ at the next election. While a good win for Labour, Wakefield came at a moment when the government is in a huge mess. The normal rule is that, come a general election, by-election wins revert back as the media circus is no longer suggesting how to vote for maximum impact. With poll leads as low as 3 per cent – and not 15 per cent or more – Labour is nowhere near a comfortable majority. On top of this, the Liberal Democrats in particular cannot replicate their by-election focus in a general election. We are going to have to work together and defend that position in public, not least after the Brexit party stood down in 317 seats for the Tories in 2019.

The likelihood is that the Tories will now elect a new leader who they believe can revive the party. In either case, we are going to need the structures and culture to ensure



For Labour, the old game is up and a new, more exciting and radical one awaits us

that, in seat after seat at the general election, tactical voting and campaigning works systematically. Remember, in the Tiverton and Honiton seat Labour was ahead of the Tories after 2019, but the Lib Dems were best placed to win from third. In seats like this and many others, unless there is a plan for cooperation there is likely to be electoral chaos for progressives next time.

Of course, people have always voted tactically. The first past the post system imposes it on us. It is the rational thing to do when 70 per cent of votes do not translate into parliamentary representation. It becomes especially rational when you look at the overlap in policy now between Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Greens. It is a case of getting 80 per cent of what you do want rather than 100 per cent of what you don't. And Labour will be by far the biggest tent in a new progressive campsite.

But tactical voting should not be all smoke and mirrors. It will not be effective if it is and will bring with it the whiff of dishonesty. Unless it is done openly and positively, it is a bit dishonest. Leaders cannot hope people will vote tactically and act cooperatively without strong and clear leadership. In the case of Labour, members should not risk being thrown out of the party if they publicly own their decision to vote tactically.

The two knights, Starmer and Davey, clearly have a by-election pact not to compete – which makes sense. But what doesn't work is to publicly deny this and not see it through to its obvious conclusion – which is to work openly and cooperatively together.

Of course, the Tories will attack us for it – precisely because they fear its pincer movement effects. But we should throw the charge of hypocrisy back at them: again, we must not forget that 317 Brexit party candidates stood down for them in 2019.

Instead of tactical voting being something done on the quiet, it should be carried out with pride. We should show first past the post up as the democratic sham it is, and in the process make the case for proportional representation, so we never have to vote tactically again.

And let's be honest here, this approach also implies the possible end of majority Labour governments – something the electorate has not backed anyway since 2005. Instead, we should embrace pluralism and cross-party cooperation as the only way to build long-term, radical and sustainable settlements against poverty and climate change and for a deeper democracy.

As ever, party members and voters are way ahead of political leaders. Labour party members now overwhelmingly back proportional representation. Activists on the ground are doing all sorts of deals in local elections to get the Tories out and are succeeding. Thirty-two per cent of people voted tactically in 2019 and huge numbers voted tactically not just in the recent by-elections in Tiverton and Honiton and Wakefield but before them in North Shropshire, Chesham and Amersham, and Batley and Spen. If we hope they do so again come the general election, then why not be honest and open, and encourage more of it?

For Labour, the old game is up and a new, more exciting and radical one awaits us. The only future worth having is one to be negotiated across parties, not imposed, especially if you rarely if ever now win office alone.

At the last election there were 60 progressive tragedies, seats where the progressive vote outnumbered the Tory vote. We divide, and they conquer. Just think how different it could have been, and could be next time, if we work together. Tactical voting and the cross-party, plural politics it enshrines, won't just help us win, it will allow us to govern in a new and different way. Truly a new politics for a new society. ■

Future proofing

Scottish Labour is back, but there is still a big task ahead, writes *Anas Sarwar MSP*



Anas Sarwar is leader of the Scottish Labour party and MSP for Glasgow

THERE HAVEN'T BEEN many days in the last decade where it has been easy to be a member of the Scottish Labour party.

Fourteen months ago, when I became Scottish Labour leader, the Scottish Greens insisted that we were about to be pushed into fourth place – we were at 14 per cent in the polls. Opinion pieces consigning us to history became so regular that you could almost set your watch by them. Months earlier, in European elections, we had slumped to fifth place – securing under 10 per cent of the vote.

At the 2021 Scottish Parliament elections, we stopped Armageddon. Yet although we have steadied the ship, we were still far away from a result to be really proud of.

This May's council elections felt like a well-deserved good day, not just for me but for the dedicated activists who worked so hard to make it a reality. We pushed the Tories out of second place and into third, both in the share of the vote and the number of seats won.

I saw trauma lifting from activists' shoulders and hope for a better political future returning to their eyes. An important barrier was broken – and we can confidently say Scottish Labour is back. Now, with Boris Johnson's resignation, we have yet another opportunity to grow support.

Thinking ahead

I am not looking in the rear-view mirror at the Scottish Conservatives. I am looking forward to how we continue rebuilding this party so we can get a chance to rebuild the country. That means doubling down on the things which made this campaign effective – a strong policy platform, a focus on what matters to voters and serious investment in the two things we know make the difference: digital investment and face-to-face campaigning.

During the campaign we had more than 9 million interactions with voters online – delivering a message about the issues that matter most right into the palm of people's hands. But there is no replacement for high-value conversations on the doorstep. Learning from wards like Hamilton South and Glasgow North East, we can roll

out grassroot-level best practices in campaigning across the party. I am not settling for second place – I aspire to first place.

I am in politics because I want to make our country a better place, and I know to do that Labour needs to win elections again. That starts at the general election and making sure Keir Starmer is our next prime minister. It requires a lot of work – and we are determined to do it.

I want the Scottish Labour party I lead to change people's lives. That is why our mission must always be to be a party of government and not a party of protest; because Labour in power makes a difference – we just have to look around the country to see this.

To give one example, in May Labour won West Dunbartonshire council – and by June the new administration had set out an ambitious £5m plan to tackle the cost of living crisis. They are fighting to end non-residential social care charges, putting more than £1m back into the pockets of vulnerable people; they are setting up a £250,000 household energy fund to help residents with the soaring cost of energy; they are delivering funding for community groups, voluntary organisations, children's activities, and unpaid carers. Those are Labour values in action, making a difference to people's lives.

As I travel around, I see a country that is hopeful for the future; outward-looking, and full of potential but looking for leadership. People are hungry for a politics which can provide the support for people to realise their dreams, and for the next generation to have the opportunities they deserve. That is the job of politics – giving people the power to change their lives for the better. But in Scotland, our politics has lost sight of that.

For too long our politics has been dominated by parties who want to put people in boxes – Leave or Remain, yes or no – and only govern for the half of the country that agrees with them. They want to divide Scotland into two camps and convince them to dislike and distrust one another.

But this election showed that things can be different and that there is a better future we can choose.

That future cannot be delivered by the Tories. The

warm and welcoming party Ruth Davidson tried to spin into existence is dead – replaced by the same old nasty Tories with no answers on things that really matter, only grudge and grievance. And it cannot be delivered by the SNP, who have spent 15 years stoking bitterness, division, and anger – all to try and achieve the one political aim they will put before everything else.

I believe that Scottish Labour is the alternative to both of these bad choices and that where they offer division we can offer hope and optimism, guided by a belief that Scotland's best days are ahead of it. That is why is it so important that Scottish Labour are back on the pitch.

Beating the Conservatives

Scotland no longer face a grim choice between the bitter and divisive Tories and the SNP – they can choose a forward-looking and optimistic Labour party.

The next electoral test for our parties will not be a referendum, it will be the general election. As we head towards it with a tired, discredited government, the question on the minds of so many people will be 'how do we get rid of the Tories?' Because right now, across the UK, people are angry at the corruption we have seen from this out-of-touch Tory party.

Nicola Sturgeon will want to pretend that this is Scotland versus England, but it is not – it will be Boris versus Britain, and Britain will win. It won't be enough to just oppose the Tories – it will be about replacing them. Across the United Kingdom, voters will see the choice between a Labour party ambitious to change their lives for the better or a hollowed-out Tory party tainted by Johnson's corruption.

In Scotland, the belief that a resurgent UK Labour party can win changes politics totally. The SNP will no longer able to get away with being just a bit better than the Tories and will be deprived of the grievance that is their number one recruiting sergeant for separation. Instead they will face a Labour party ambitious for the future and optimistic about Scotland's place in a reformed and renewed UK.

It is my job to make sure that when the time comes, we are worthy of the public's support. That is my mission – day and night. And we are already starting that campaign to build a coalition of the people, across the country,

to boot Boris out of Downing Street. Let me be clear – that is a coalition of the people, not of political parties.

At the next general election, Labour's message will be clear – no ifs, no buts, no deals with the SNP. For 15 years, nationalists have tried to stoke up bitterness, division, and anger. And never in the history of devolution has there been a single party with so much power and time which has done so little with it.

On Nicola Sturgeon's watch child poverty has risen, NHS waiting times have soared, rail services have been cut and the attainment gap remains huge. While the first minister is strong on rhetoric and grandstanding, the reality of her failures mean that thousands of Scots are unable to receive NHS treatment, and even more are being hit in the pocket by the cost of living crisis.

The legacy of the SNP is one of division and building an 'us versus them' culture in our country. That failure has left people knocking back items at food banks because they can not afford to cook them. Teachers are taking their own resources into the classroom, children are waiting three years to speak to a mental health counsellor and our NHS is on its knees despite the incredible efforts of its staff.

So, when we get to that next general election, an out of touch and out of ideas SNP cannot claim to be the party of change and the future. That is exactly why they have started ramping up their efforts to stoke division and talk up the prospect of another referendum.

The SNP are trying to drag people back into the arguments of the past because they don't have any ideas for the future. These latest referendum plans are nothing but a piece of political theatre to try and gain relevance in the general election – but it won't work.

Building a better future for Scotland is what comes next, with a coalition determined to boot out the Tories and change the UK forever. We will do this by tackling the cost of living crisis, improving housing, fighting climate change and much more.

My vision is one where our politics is respectful and works for the people of our country: where power is closer to citizens, where children have the skills to fulfil their ambitions, where we come together to save our planet, where justice is always on people's side and where poverty and inequality are a thing of the past. Let's build that future together. **F**

At the next general election
Labour's message will
be clear – no ifs, no buts,
no deals with the SNP



MOMENTS OF HIGH DRAMA

Across nearly 45 years in parliament, Margaret Beckett has made history and shaped it. She speaks to *Kate Murray* about the rows, resignations and decisions she made that changed Britain forever

PEOPLE UNDERESTIMATE MARGARET Beckett at their peril. Just ask Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov. Beckett was the newly appointed UK foreign secretary when Lavrov, unhappy about a speech that an American official had made, launched into him at a meeting chaired by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

“Lavrov kept going on at him, challenging him for quite some time, and nobody else said anything,” Beckett recalls now. “I was just getting more and more awkward and uncomfortable and embarrassed. And in the end, I said: ‘I feel very uncomfortable saying this because I’m very conscious that I’m completely new to this gathering. But I have been in full-time politics for more than 30 years and I’m not used to hearing a minister attack an official and I must admit, I don’t like it.’ He looked completely astonished but he stopped doing it.”

It’s not the first time in her career that Beckett has surprised those around her. She recounts the story of when a national newspaper journalist made a freedom of information request for some official papers – only to be taken aback by some of Beckett’s rather pithy annotations. “He obviously was one of the people who thought I was a quiet little mouse who never said boo to a goose,” she says. To the media, she explains, she was ‘somebody who just does what she’s told, and keeps her mouth shut’ but behind the scenes it was different. “Somebody who was

coming to work for me told me once that he’d asked, obviously as you do, about me and had been told that I was a very tough negotiator, who usually wins her battles in Whitehall.”

As a cabinet member Beckett had her fair share of battles, not least over one of the policies which is regarded as one of her greatest triumphs – the minimum wage which she introduced when she was trade and industry secretary.

“There were a lot of rows, but they were rows about good things – the right things,” she says. “There was a dispute about how we should handle the minimum wage. It wasn’t a dispute about whether we brought in the minimum wage, it was how we brought it in.”

“If you have disputes with colleagues, you have them in private and you don’t bring either the colleague or the party or the government into disrepute. So I never had any of my fights in public. And I’ve certainly never had any of them in the press.”

This will be Beckett’s last parliament after she announced in March that she would step down at the next election. In her time as an MP, she has notched up a number of significant achievements: the first woman to lead the Labour party, the second woman (after Margaret Thatcher) to hold one of the great offices of state and the woman MP who has served the most years in parliament. Yet as a youngster she never had any aspiration to sit on the green benches.



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“I never thought about being a politician. I’d never seen an MP or met an MP until I joined the Labour party,” she says. Joining the party was itself a struggle – it took two years for anyone to answer her letters because her local ward was defunct. But Labour, she says, was always the obvious choice for someone with a background like hers, where her family was struggling to keep its head above water. “It was knife edge a lot of the time. And it seemed to me there wasn’t enough of a safety net to help people who got into problems that weren’t of their own making, or indeed maybe were of their own making,” she says. “It was a given for me that it was the Labour party that was the refuge for people who didn’t have wealth and power.”

Within a few years of making it into the party, Beckett was in parliament, elected in the second general election of 1974. Immediately after winning her Lincoln seat, she was appointed as Judith Hart’s parliamentary private secretary – indeed she was offered the job even before Hart’s own election count had finished – and then progressed via the whip’s office to become a junior education minister in Harold Wilson’s government. It was, she recalls, an exciting parliament, with moments of high drama. “I was

“It was a given for me that it was the Labour party that was the refuge for people who didn't have wealth or power”

in committee when we got the news that Harold had resigned, and it was extraordinary,” she says. “Everybody who could shot out of the room immediately and gathered in the corridor. And I reckon it took about 10 minutes of people exclaiming and being astonished and saying: ‘Why does everybody think it’s happened?’. And then within that 10 minutes we were talking about his successor.”

Throughout her career, she was supported by her late husband Leo, who died last December. “He was very good. Not just with me – he was very good at identifying people who he thought should be in elected office, persuading them to run and then supporting them.

So I was very fortunate always to have somebody of much greater and rather different experience than mine in the background, able to talk things over with and give advice, and so on. That was immensely helpful.”

In her early years in parliament (interrupted by losing Lincoln in 1979 before returning as MP for Derby South in 1983), Beckett was seen as being on Labour’s left wing. Has she been on a rightwards journey in the party? She says she doesn’t feel her politics have changed – with the exception of her attitude to Europe, where she campaigned

‘vigorously’ for a no vote in the 1975 referendum on EU membership but changed her view when ‘Europe began to change’.

Otherwise, she says, “I don’t feel I have changed dramatically. But the boxes you’re expected to fit into, those boxes have changed and been redefined.”

Factionalism within the Labour ranks has always been a problem, Beckett says, but in her view things are much better now than they used to be. “Judith Hart told me that when she was first elected, that when she went into the tea room, there were several Labour MPs in the queue and none of them spoke to her, because they were on the right and she was on the left. People just literally ignored her.”

Better it may be, but the party has had some strife-filled years of late. Beckett says part of the problem when Jeremy Corbyn was leader was his team. “We used to say Tony [Blair] was a control freak, but God he had nothing on Jeremy. I mean, to be fair, it wasn’t Jeremy himself but the people around Jeremy.”

“If you didn’t agree with Jeremy, you were accused of attacking him simply because you didn’t agree. And I remember saying once at the NEC: ‘I’m currently on the ninth or 10th leader of the Labour party I’ve served under and there has never been one of them that I’ve agreed with about everything and I don’t intend to start now.’ And Jeremy giggled – Jeremy didn’t care but the people around him were sort of ‘you’re a traitor’. I thought that was a) horrible and b) counterproductive.”

Beckett has had constructive relationships with politicians from different political traditions – ‘Condi’ Rice – with whom she ‘hit it off’ being a notable example. But she remains scathing about the damage she has seen the Conservatives inflict over her time in politics.

And in her view, David Cameron and George Osborne were in some ways worse than Margaret Thatcher and her ministers. “Thatcher was ideologically determined to try and destroy the welfare state and she had a very good go at it. George Osborne in many ways made it worse,” she says. “He inherited something that was already a thin welfare state, and pared it to the bone. He was a very smart politician, a very clever opponent. But what a nasty piece of work.”

As for the current crop of Conservatives, Beckett says: “There are a lot of decent people in the Conservative party. But where are they? What are they doing? They’ve consented to all this stuff about undermining the independence of the Electoral Commission, making it more difficult for people to vote. We’re slowly following in the footsteps of the Republicans in the United States, who don’t care how they win as long as they win. And they’re all going along with it.”

Beckett pulled off a number of achievements in government as well as the minimum wage. Her work on climate change in the Foreign Office was a particular highlight. “One of the things that that I am proud of very much is that when I was in the chair of the Security Council, we had the very first Security Council debate on climate

change,” she says. “The Security Council only discusses peace and security and I insisted that climate change was a matter of peace and security. That was the first time that had been done.”

Beckett, of course, only had the very top job in the party in the period between the untimely death of John Smith and the election of Tony Blair. Many are concerned that although Labour has had two women as acting leaders – Beckett and then Harriet Harman (twice) – it has never actually elected a woman to the top job. Beckett does not think it’s necessarily a systemic problem. “It’s just sheer bad luck. There’s never been quite the right person and quite the right time together,” she argues. “But I’ve always voted for the person who I thought was the right person at the time, irrespective of whether it was a man or a woman”

Beckett says the current man in the job, Keir Starmer, has been performing well in difficult times.

“I hear all these smartass remarks about how he shouldn’t be doing this, that or the other. But he’s visibly prime ministerial material, which is a step in the right direction. Nobody would say you can’t see him as prime minister,” she says. “He’s been handling a set of really unique difficulties. The whole Covid thing, made it very difficult to attack the government without being seen as debasing the coin of politics and being unpatriotic and all that sort of

thing. It was all very, very difficult to handle, especially as he was new to the job himself. So I think he’s had a very difficult road to follow and I think he’s done all right.”

As she looks back on her career, Beckett says she feels fortunate, particularly as she had, she admits, no ‘master plan’.

“I never applied for any of the jobs I got. It was always that I was suggested by somebody else, or asked by somebody else,” she says. “I did find what I enjoyed. I had no idea that I would enjoy international negotiations until I found myself having to do them. I discovered I absolutely loved it – I found it very enjoyable, time-consuming, and exciting. There is a huge amount of luck in everything and I have been extremely lucky.”

Politicians, despite the flak they get, can still change lives for the better, Beckett concludes. “It makes an enormous difference who makes the decisions. That’s the thing that has me screaming at the television when I see people saying things like: ‘Oh, well, I don’t suppose anybody else could have done better than Boris.’ Yes they could – anybody could. Anybody with enough conscientiousness to go to the meetings for a start,” she says. “I’ve had a long period of involvement with negotiations on things like climate change. There are a lot of people who are very keen on these issues who despise politics and politicians. They join Greenpeace like a shot or Friends of the Earth, but they wouldn’t have anything to do with politics. But the fact of the matter is unless you’re born to wealth and power, the only way to influence things and change things is through politics.” ■

Kate Murray is editor of the Fabian Review

“There are a lot of decent people in the Conservative party. But where are they? What are they doing?”

A different frame

Growth at all costs is unsustainable – *Michael Albert*



Michael Albert is a lecturer in international relations at SOAS, University of London

THE EVIDENCE IS clear that the UK needs to take bolder action in order to address the crises of climate, energy, and biodiversity. A recent report from the Office of Environmental Protection shows that existing laws are failing to halt biodiversity loss and accumulating pollution on UK land. Similarly, the UK Climate Change Committee last year found that the UK's climate policies are woefully inadequate to put it on track to meet its net zero by 2050 target – itself an inadequate goal, given the UK's unique historic responsibility for cumulative emissions.

The UK is not only failing to do its share to tackle the climate crisis: it is also setting itself up for more energy price shocks and cost of living crises down the road by locking itself into long-term reliance on oil and gas supplies, which will only become more volatile over time as the most easily accessible reserves are depleted.

Can policies associated with the emerging discourse of 'degrowth' provide solutions to these crises?

There is no one way to define degrowth, but it is understood here as a vision for an alternative political-economic system that prioritises wellbeing and quality of life while reducing material and energy consumption. It is based on three core premises: 1) beyond a certain threshold, economic growth is unnecessary to improve collective welfare and causes more harm than good; 2) climate and biodiversity targets are much more challenging (if not impossible) to meet in a context of continuous growth; and 3) it is entirely possible to improve collective welfare even while dramatically cutting resource consumption.

Degrowth remains a marginal discourse, but signs indicate that it is steadily infiltrating the mainstream even when the degrowth framing is not explicitly adopted. A 2019 report commissioned by the OECD, for example, claims that rich countries must go 'beyond growth' by enacting a paradigm shift in economic policy that prioritises quality of life, equality, resilience, and sustainability. The UK parliament held its first ever debate in November 2021 on 'wellbeing economics' as an alternative to GDP, and Scotland is already a world leader in integrating wellbeing indicators into policymaking (though with so

far only limited effects on policy outcomes). Furthermore, a YouGov poll from 2020 showed that eight in 10 Britons believed that the government should prioritise health and wellbeing over economic growth during the Covid-19 pandemic, while six in 10 believed wellbeing should continue to be prioritised once the pandemic is over.

But should degrowth become a pillar of Labour's policy vision? Many are concerned by the unfortunate associations often sparked by the term – which is often equated with austerity. Indeed, while the term degrowth (unlike other concepts like sustainable development) has the merit of not being easily co-opted into a business-as-usual framework, it is questionable that the term itself could form the basis of a popular paradigm shift.

But while it may be best to refrain from explicitly adopting a degrowth frame, the policies promoted by degrowth advocates have the potential to garner wide popularity.

Advocates in particular highlight three core sets of policies that would weaken the state's reliance on GDP growth while simultaneously improving economic security, equality, and environmental protection: 1) replace GDP with alternative indicators (such as the sustainable development goals) that more effectively measure collective welfare; 2) enact policies that ensure economic security for all in the absence of GDP growth while also increasing leisure time, such as a reduction of the working week, job guarantees, and universal basic income; and 3) implement more stringent cap and trade policies that, in contrast

to carbon taxes, ban the extraction of fossil fuels, ensure climate targets are met, and guarantee equitable access to affordable energy for consumers (eg through 'tradeable energy quotas').

Questions undoubtedly remain about how these policies would be designed and the challenges they would face. In particular, the challenge of financing increased social and

ecological spending in a post-GDP economy is difficult but manageable, and would require experimenting with heterodox ideas like modern monetary theory. The political obstacles to such policies are formidable. But given the headwinds that will make it more and more challenging to sustain GDP growth in the coming years – including ageing populations, the end of fossil fuel abundance, and worsening climate shocks – it is essential that Labour has a strategy in place to respond creatively to future recessions. This cannot be via the same socially and ecologically bankrupt strategy of 'growth at all costs', but with a vision to create a more fair, sustainable, and people-centred post-growth economy. ■

It is essential that Labour has a strategy in place to respond creatively to future recessions



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A united response

Russia's attempt to redraw the map of Europe has huge implications for NATO and the future of western co-operation, as *Wyn Rees* explains



Wyn Rees is a professor of international security at the University of Nottingham's School of Politics and International Relations

THE RUSSIAN INVASION of Ukraine in February this year was an event of epic significance. Russia's action has changed the security order in Europe: it has attempted to redraw state borders by an unprovoked act of aggression and sent millions of refugees flooding across the continent. And now, two countries – Finland and Sweden – whose neutral status has been a byword in European security – are applying to join NATO.

The invasion was launched by one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, a state with responsibility for upholding international peace and security. The Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, has accused western powers of engaging in a 'proxy war', using Ukraine against his country. Furthermore, president Vladimir Putin introduced the issue of nuclear weapons into the conflict over Ukraine. He accused the west of trying to turn Ukraine into a nuclear armed state and threatened unprecedented levels of destruction on any country that tried to intervene on Ukraine's side.

The actual invasion caught much of the western community by surprise. Ukraine itself, as well as countries such as Germany, saw the build-up of Russian forces as part of a strategy to intimidate and coerce, rather than the harbinger of an invasion. Yet the intelligence agencies of the United States and the UK correctly foretold that a full-scale attack was imminent. With the aid of hindsight, there were warning lights that had grown more intense. Putin had embarked on conventional and nuclear rearmament from 2007. He had sent forces into Georgia in 2008 when the government in Tbilisi had attempted to take control of South Ossetia. Furthermore, in 2014 Russian troops had seized Crimea and provided support for secessionists in Donetsk and Luhansk who wanted to break away from Ukraine. Under Putin, Russia had demonstrated a willingness to alter borders by force of arms.

Russia was hostile towards countries in its 'near abroad' that it considered to be part of its rightful sphere of influence.

Putin was critical of the European security order that emerged from the end of the Cold War in which NATO enlarged and treated the Russian Federation as its potential adversary. Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic were in the first tranche of NATO enlargement in 1999, followed in May 2004 by a 'big bang' enlargement when seven countries were granted accession. Russia entered into a confrontational relationship with the George W Bush administration over the Iraq war of 2003 and over US sponsorship of Georgian and Ukrainian candidatures for NATO membership. These tensions were exacerbated in November 2013 when Ukraine's parliament considered an EU 'association agreement'. Russia feared that former territories of the USSR could join western security and economic organisations.

President Putin and a small band of advisers seem to have expected that a Russian invasion of Ukraine would result in its rapid collapse and the installation of a pro-Kremlin government. But instead the people of Ukraine have regarded the attack as an existential crisis. Ukraine's armed forces have conducted a robust defence of their national territory with the help of weapon supplies funnelled from NATO governments. The Russian military has been unable to assert air superiority, its equipment has been shown to be badly maintained and its logistics have been chaotic. Although Russia has taken control of cities such as Kherson and Mariupol, it has failed to take the capital and it has suffered extensive casualties and the destruction of a significant proportion of its heavy armour.

In mid-April, Russia shifted the focus of its operation to the Donbas region and resorted to heavier bombardment of military and civilian positions. Its strategy appears to be to inject momentum into the land campaign by focusing on seizing a corridor between Crimea and Russian territory. NATO countries have responded to the change in Russian strategy by increasing the weapons provided to Ukraine and supplying more sophisticated systems.

President Putin seems to have expected that a Russian invasion of Ukraine would result in its rapid collapse

Thus far the conflict has led to the frustration of president Putin's war aims. Rather than weakening NATO, the alliance has come together in common resolve. As well as resupplying Ukraine, NATO has bolstered troop strength amongst its members closest to Russia, such as the Baltic states. The tensions over which the Trump administration presided in trans-Atlantic relations have dissipated as president Biden has rushed supplies and reinforcements to Europe. The formerly neutral states of Finland and Sweden have reversed 70 years of policy by requesting to join the alliance.

For its part, the European Union has exhibited unusual speed and unity in the face of the crisis. European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen has imposed a progressive range of sanctions against Moscow and has announced the ambitious target of ceasing the importation of its oil and gas. In the case of countries highly dependent on Russian energy imports, such as Hungary and the Slovak Republic, they will be accorded extra time to make this transition. As far as its leading member is concerned, Germany conducted a volte face in foreign and defence policy by announcing a huge increase in defence spending and the shipment of weapons to Ukraine. Despite this, chancellor Olaf Scholz has not escaped criticism for his qualified support for the Zelensky government in Kyiv. German aspirations to lead in Europe, through the EU, have suffered a setback.

The long-term outlook for the architecture of European security remains uncertain. Much will depend on the outcome of the war. A protracted war of attrition in the Donbas could result in mounting casualties for both the Russians and Ukrainians. A reversal of Russian fortunes is not out of the question if its army could encircle the Ukrainian military and exploit their advantages in armoured forces and heavy artillery. Even an escalation of the war is possible if Russian patience over the provision of NATO equipment boils over or miscalculation leads to hostilities with the west.

For the immediate future both NATO and the EU appear united in the face of Russian aggression. Defence spending will be increased and vulnerabilities in NATO's military posture, such as shortages in ammunition,

rectified. A period of permanent competition lies ahead in which Russia will attempt to challenge NATO across all domains, from cyber conflict to hybrid warfare. The west must find ways to contain and manage the threat from Russia. It must reassert the territorial integrity of Ukraine and create the foundations for a constructive peace. Ways need to be found to re-engage the Kremlin in both conventional and nuclear arms control so as to ensure that the European continent does not become the battleground for a future war. Finding a new equilibrium with Russia, after the conflict in Ukraine, will be a demanding but necessary task.

The deeper trends in western security, although fundamentally shaken by the invasion of Ukraine, endure. The greater challenge to the west and its post-Cold War order derives from China rather than Russia. Whilst Russia has proven to be the acute danger, China represents the long-term challenge. Since 2011 and president Obama's 'pivot' towards the Indo-Pacific, the US has recognised that the foremost threat to western primacy derives from Beijing. China is a superpower with a military that is coming to rival the United States and with an economy to match. In comparison, Russia is a formidable nuclear power but with an economy approximately the same size as a medium-sized European country. The west has urged China to stop supporting Russia's illegal war in Ukraine.

Europe must strive to become capable of meeting its own security needs. Increased defence spending should provide a platform on which European members of NATO can take the lead in the core missions of collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security. For more ad hoc missions with a broader security, rather than defence, emphasis, the European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) offers an appropriate framework. While CSDP should prosper, it must ensure that it is complementary rather than competitive with NATO.

The newly re-elected president of France, Emmanuel Macron, could provide leadership within the EU with the aim of enhancing both its economic and security dimensions. But flexible ways must be found to enable post-Brexit Britain to play a role in EU security policy because without it the continent will be less safe. Greater

European burden-sharing will mitigate many of the tensions with the US as it shifts to become a continental guarantor of last resort. That will release US resources to be re-directed towards the security of the Indo-Pacific region. If something positive emerges from this crisis it will be that US-European security interests have re-aligned and the unity of NATO has been restored. ■

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The days after

More than a decade after western intervention in Libya,
Ian Martin considers what we can learn from what happened



Ian Martin was general secretary of the Fabian Society from 1982 to 1985. He later led United Nations human rights and peace operations in Haiti, Rwanda, East Timor (now Timor-Leste), and Nepal, and in 2011-12 was the special representative of the secretary-general and head of the UN support mission in Libya. His new book, All Necessary Measures? The United Nations and International Intervention in Libya, is published by Hurst

ON 21 MARCH 2011, the House of Commons supported the Cameron government's participation in UN-mandated intervention in Libya by 557 votes to 13, with only 11 Labour MPs opposed. Today, more than a decade since the uprising that ousted Muammar Gaddafi, Libya remains deeply divided after another civil war, victim not only of the ambitions and corruption of its own elites, but also of the involvement of rival external actors. Meanwhile, the chaotic collapse of the western intervention in Afghanistan – and the post-invasion tribulations of Iraq – demand further analysis of the forms and consequences of international intervention and non-intervention.

The intervention in Libya was initially regarded by some as a remarkable success: a first application of the doctrine of 'responsibility to protect' by the UN Security Council; the prevention of an impending massacre of civilians; a NATO operation that itself suffered no casualties and caused only very limited civilian deaths and damage to infrastructure and an opportunity for democratic forces to lead Libya out of 40 years of dictatorship.

Rival narratives now compete. Russia asserts that the west should never have intervened to overthrow Gaddafi. Vladimir Putin's condemnation of military action, which Russia allowed the UN to authorise by abstaining from use of its Security Council veto, is seen as contributing to the hardening of his opposition to the west. Former president Barack Obama maintains that although the intervention was justified to protect civilians, failing to plan for the day after was the worst mistake of his presidency.

It has become common for Libya and Iraq to be coupled together as prime examples of the failure of western intervention. No purported parallel could be less apt. The invasion of Iraq to oust Saddam Hussain was a gratuitous decision. The 2011 Libyan uprising, like the neighbouring uprisings of the 'Arab spring', took western leaders by surprise. The west had largely made its peace with Muammar Gaddafi after he agreed to decommission Libya's chemical and nuclear weapons programmes and settled legal proceedings regarding the 1988 Lockerbie bombing. Western

governments had come to value Libya as an ally in their counter-terrorism efforts – despite the country's human rights violations, embarrassingly exposed by documents found after the fall of Gaddafi's regime. It was major sections of the Libyan people who decided that they would no longer put up with his regime, and it was their uprising and Gaddafi's reaction to it that compelled external actors to consider their own responses.

In reassessing the intervention, some key questions need to be considered. Was the use of military force justified to prevent a massacre of civilians by Gaddafi's forces in response to the uprising? Did NATO and the countries which conducted military operations exceed the mandate of the UN Security Council, to use "all necessary measures ... to protect civilians", by seeking regime change? Could mediation efforts have succeeded in bringing about a managed transition from the Gaddafi regime to a democratic Libya? Was there a failure to plan for 'the day after' and what more could and should have been done by those who intervened to avoid the divisions that have since plagued Libya?

There was certainly exaggeration in some reporting, including by Al Jazeera, with talk of genocide and comparisons with Rwanda and Srebrenica. But the fears were real and past failures to intervene weighed heavily on decision-makers. Gaddafi's use of lethal force and his threatening rhetoric were unresponsive to a wave of international condemnation and a first Security Council resolution imposing sanctions and referral to the International Criminal Court. There can be no certainty as to the extent of killings and reprisals that would have happened had Gaddafi's forces taken Benghazi and other towns that were in revolt across Libya. But I believed then, and on re-examining the evidence believe now, that the initial intervention was justified.

UN authorisation was for the use of force to protect civilians, but the objective of David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy was soon regime change, and they pressed for wider targeting by NATO. NATO was scrupulous in seeking to avoid civilian casualties, but it extended its

**I believed then, and
on re-examining the
evidence believe
now, that the initial
intervention was justified**



operations from preventing attacks by Gaddafi's forces to supporting rebel advances. In the face of Gaddafi's unceasing threats, the interveners argued that only regime change would fully protect civilians. Outside NATO's operations from the air and sea, the UK, France, Qatar and the UAE – referred to by Number 10 as 'the four amigos' – coordinated the secret operations of their special forces assisting rebel forces on the ground. There was no accountability to the UN Security Council for the military operations as they developed, and it is clear that there would have been no authorisation had their eventual scope been known.

Cameron and Sarkozy had no interest in the mediation efforts of a UN special envoy, the African Union and others to end the fighting and establish a path to a managed transition. The suggestion of the UK chief of defence staff that the bombing might be paused after Benghazi had been saved to allow an opportunity for diplomatic efforts found no political support. Complementary pressures by the African Union on Gaddafi and the leading interveners on the rebel leadership would have offered the best chance of a mediated outcome. It is impossible to say whether it could have succeeded; certainly, any mediated outcome faced a huge obstacle in the extreme obduracy of Gaddafi and the virulence of the hatred his four decades of brutal dictatorship had engendered among so many Libyans. But it is clear, as Norway's then foreign minister concluded from his country's little-known efforts, that "the mindset in London and Paris didn't have openings for really reflecting on the diplomatic option."

The very limited understanding of Libya among western policymakers, and absence of strategic foresight regarding its post-Gaddafi future and the regional implications, are striking. But it is not the case that there was no post-conflict planning. The UN (for whose planning I was responsible), the UK and the US all made significant efforts, interacting with each other and with Libyan planners designated by the National Transitional Council. Too many of the decision-makers in the western governments assumed that if the kind of initial chaos that followed the fall of Baghdad could be avoided, the subsequent task in a wealthy country with a small population, well-educated professionals and no sectarian

divide would be manageable. This, of course, was a view that went well with their desire not to take any major post-conflict responsibility.

In retrospect, many of us in the international community underestimated two factors that would be the most divisive as Libya began to tear itself apart: the conflict between Islamist and other political groups and militias; and the rivalries of external actors that would begin to play out in Libya.

The most fatal flaw in planning for the challenges ahead related to the proliferation of armed groups. The UK and other countries deeply involved in arming, training and mentoring the rebel forces contributed to their fragmentation, as their support went directly to commanders on the ground. They did little to use their understanding and relationships, or to work together, in order to assist Libya's immediate post-Gaddafi authorities to establish authority over a security sector which presented unprecedented challenges.

Reflecting on Libya's history, it was not possible for there to have been a smooth path to a modern democratic state in a country that had never known any period of sustained institutional development, and that displays the distortions of an oil-rich economy. Libya had successively experienced being ruled as separate provinces of the Ottoman empire; then a degree of unification during a particularly brutal Italian colonisation; then becoming a second world war battleground for others, giving rise to British and French military administrations; then a weak monarchy; and then 42 years under a leader who was explicitly hostile to the development of the institutions of a modern state.

The decade since Gaddafi was ousted has seen more conflict and division, exacerbated by the countries that have supported and armed contending factions. "The calamity that followed the fall [of Gaddafi]," the British-Libyan writer Hisham Matar concludes, "is more true to the nature of his dictatorship than to the ideals of the revolution." But there remain many Libyans who stay true to those ideals. Now, the UK must work through the UN to ensure that they have another opportunity to put them into practice. ■

From the jaws of defeat

The 1992 election result was a crushing disappointment for Labour. *Paul Richards* looks at what Keir Starmer can learn from what happened



Paul Richards is a political writer and former special adviser. He was Labour's shadow cabinet policy adviser on environmental protection at the 1992 general election

IT IS 30 years since Neil Kinnock stood on the steps of Labour HQ at 150 Walworth Road, alongside Bryan Gould, Glenys Kinnock, and a crowd of dejected supporters, and gave a dignified speech conceding defeat to John Major. This was Labour's fourth defeat after 13 years of Conservative rule, amid recession, soaring home repossessions, unemployment at 2.5 million, and political chaos caused by the collapse of the poll tax. Labour had been ahead in the polls, and was widely, but not universally, expected to win, or at the very least form a minority government.

For us young staffers, campaigners and advisers, watching Kinnock outside Walworth Road, it was a heartbreaking, shattering, and formative moment. I recall not only the brilliant election team, but also, rather incongruously, the actor Susan Tully, who played Michelle in *Eastenders*, Ben Elton, and other celebrity supporters who had earlier gathered for the victory party at Millbank Tower. After the result from Basildon where David Amess won a majority of 1,480 despite all the polling promising his defeat, the champagne remained corked.

Target seats in the Midlands such as Coventry South West and Birmingham Hall Green, and in London such as Mitcham and Morden, and Brentford and Isleworth, remained Tory. Both Brighton seats stayed blue. A dozen or so seats, including Bristol North West, Hayes and Harlington, Bolton North East, Norwich North, Corby, Slough and Southampton Test remained Tory with wafer-thin majorities. Labour lost four seats won in by-elections since 1987: Monmouth, Mid Staffs, Langbaugh and Vale of Glamorgan (which the Tories regained with a majority of just 19) Gyles Brandreth won Chester.

The Tories won 42 per cent of the vote, the same as Boris Johnson in 2019. A record number of people – 14 million – voted Conservative on 9 April 1992. They queued round the block to vote against a Labour party they believed would create economic chaos and clobber them with taxes. The swing to Labour – after a Thatcher government, social strife, strikes and poll tax – was just 2.2 per cent.

There were plenty of scalps including nine ministers, but in the end Labour secured just 35 per cent of the vote, up just three points on 1987, and six up from the catastrophe of 1983. Labour gained 42 MPs, including future stars Angela Eagle, Stephen Byers, Alan Millburn, Tessa Jowell and Peter Mandelson, and won 271 seats in total (70 more than at the 2019 debacle).

But Labour's defeat was nonetheless crushing. The 'C2s', the aspiring lower middle classes, with a mortgaged home, a Mondeo on the drive, and dreams of a conservatory, turned away from the 'Nightmare on Kinnock Street' and backed Major. Better the devil you know.

From the boiler room, the campaign seemed chaotic throughout. In an age before email, the campaign was spread out across three or four separate buildings – the HQ at Walworth Road, the Shadow Communications Agency in Transport House in Smith Square, the economics team next door at the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, the media team at Millbank, and other functions literally and metaphorically all over the place.

The campaign grid was blown off course by the gargantuan row about 'Jennifer's Ear', a party broadcast about two girls needing grommets in their ears. One waited for NHS treatment, the other got her operation privately. It was supposed to be about the inequities of a two-tier system, but I suspected at the time it served as an advert for private medical insurance. It created chaos and shouting, and obscured Labour's narrative on the NHS.

I am told the view from the bridge was even worse. Philip Gould recalls that 'it was less of an election campaign, more a collective trauma.' He tells the story in *The Unfinished Revolution* of simmering resentments and distrust amongst the protagonists, spilling into outbursts and rows, but most of all dysfunction between leader, shadow cabinet, and campaign staff.

However, elections are not determined by four or five weeks of frantic campaign activity, but instead by the leaders, personalities, instincts, values, tone of voice, actions, and above all policies that political parties offer

The swing to Labour – after a Thatcher government, social strife, strikes and poll tax – was just 2.2 per cent

over years not weeks. The result owed little either way to the rows about electoral reform, disarray over the 20p tax band, or even the Sheffield rally. Rallies make little difference to election results.

Keir Starmer was a 30-year-old human rights lawyer at the Doughty Street Chambers during the 1992 election. As leader, what lessons can he learn from those events of 30 years ago?

1. Beware the forthcoming leadership switcheroo. Philip Gould's recollection of hearing the radio news that the Tories had swapped Thatcher for Major was simple: "I knew it was all over." Labour had focused so much of its firepower on Margaret Thatcher that her absence left them unclear what to do next. John Major was as responsible as anyone for the recession and poll tax, but somehow presented a fresh face. The Tories pulled the old switcheroo again in May 2019. With Boris Johnson now resigning as prime minister, Labour must not allow him to be the scapegoat sent off into the desert as someone else swoops in, all new and shiny. The attack must be on 13 years of Tory government, not one easily fenestrated ex-prime minister.
2. After defeat, you have to change. A lot. Despite all of Kinnock's efforts to eradicate the extremism and sheer nastiness that characterised Labour in the late 70s and early 80s, the lingering impression was that the party was in hock to forces out of step with the British people. The change ahead of the 1992 election looked grudging, and the voters can spot these things. Starmer needs a single, theatrical act to show today's Labour is not the one people rejected in 2019. But Labour's offer cannot merely be 'not the 2019 show'. It is obvious that our manifesto must be written afresh in the light of the pandemic, recession, and war in Europe. Those calling for a reprint of the 2019 manifesto will sound increasingly eccentric as the next election nears, like people calling for a return to imperial measurements.
3. Elections are about policy. Kinnock's policy review involved the salami-slicing away of deeply reckless or unpopular policies from the 1980s such unilateral

nuclear disarmament and withdrawal from Europe. But what was left behind was incoherent, the product of many committees but no single vision. There were lots of little policies such as a pledge to allow private financing of trains on the North Kent line (but no other) and the final pledge to 'adamantly oppose any attempts to permit commercial exploitation of the virgin continent of Antarctica'. But no big cut-through of an idea, or even a pledge card of illustrative, deliverable offers.

4. People care about their money. Most people work hard for their money, and don't take kindly to politicians taking it away. Labour's 1992 tax policy, explained in a pretend 'Red Book' launched on the steps of the Treasury, was to scrap Lamont's new 20p tax band, introduce a new 50p band on incomes over £36,375, and the £21,000 upper earnings limit on national insurance contributions would go. Pensions and child credits would go up. The fine print may have added up, but the accumulated effect was to give the Tories an early Christmas present. The Tories modelled Labour's tax and spend proposals, and came up with the extra tax it would cost – £1,250 – and stuck it on the side of a big bomb. 'Labour's Tax Bombshell' appeared on billboards on every high street in every marginal (and one at the end of Walworth Road just to psych out Labour staff on the way to work). The lesson is you have to win the argument before you can expect people to hand over their cash, and until you do so, there is no advantage in detailed plans which scare people away.
5. You need strength in depth. Kinnock's big hitters were John Smith, Roy Hattersley, Margaret Beckett, Robin Cook, John Prescott, with Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and Mo Mowlam snapping at their heels. They were talented, but not a team. The tensions over personality and policy created an impression of rivals jostling for position, rather than a team waiting to take the reins. David Hare's play about the 1992 election, *The Absence of War*, captured some of this atmosphere. Starmer has some equally big shadow cabinet hitters going into the next election – Wes Streeting, Bridget Phillipson, Yvette Cooper, Rosena Allin-Khan, Peter Kyle, Jonathan Reynolds, and Rachel Reeves come to mind. But he must watch for disunity and stamp out disloyalty. He must project a team ready for office, not the runners and riders for the next leadership election.

The removal of Johnson and the election of a new leader, and a new prime minister, may seem enough of a change to voters. They may believe the Tory leopard has changed its spots. The danger is Labour seems irrelevant rather than an alternative government.

Above all, 1992 taught us that Labour cannot win by hoping the Tories will give up, or with 'one more heave'. To win requires a fresh prospectus, credible leaders, new attractive policies, and instincts, values and language which chime with people we want to trust us. The next time Labour contested an election, we won a majority of 179 and governed for 13 years. History teaches us that a Labour victory is possible, but that it is never the result of happenstance. **F**



Books

Eton mess

The journey from public school to Westminster taken by a circle of Tory MPs who studied at Oxford University shows just how unequal we are, writes *Kate Murray*



Kate Murray is editor of the Fabian Review

For many progressives, Brexit Britain feels like a foreign country. This land of the ‘hostile environment’, of billions wasted on contracts for politicians’ mates and of ‘one rule for us’ ministers thumbing their noses at the public feels a world away from the post-war consensus we once took for granted. But for the Brexiteers, of course, that’s precisely the point. As Simon Kuper points out in this timely book, in the eyes of many of those who have led our country over the last 12 years, “modernity could only feel like decline. Your fathers and grandfathers had ruled the world and here you were, growing up in a struggling mid-sized outpost of the European Economic Community.”

Chums tells how today’s Britain has been shaped by a coterie of Oxford University students from the 1980s, including Boris Johnson, Michael Gove, David Cameron, Jacob Rees-Mogg and Daniel Hannan. Some of the anecdotes retold in the book are familiar ones: Johnson in the Balliol College bar mocking a state school student who had come for an interview or Rees-Mogg wandering through the streets of Oxford ‘dressed like a Victorian vicar, in a double-breasted suit with an umbrella’. But familiar or not, the cumulative effect of these stories is devastating. We are governed by an elite posing as an anti-elite, driven by personal interest and a sense that they are born to rule.

The 1980s generation, possessed of what Kuper calls ‘ambition without a cause’ trod an easy path from public school to the dreaming spires and then on to Westminster. Many had had little contact with the world of those less blessed by family wealth and status: even as MPs those who strolled into safe seats are still rarely troubled by the harsh reality lived by the most vulnerable in our society. Instead, we read, their trajectory through life has given them an ease in office and a love for the kind of cut-and-thrust debating honed in the Oxford Union.

But there is a contradiction here. On the one hand, Kuper rightly points out that success in student debates



Chums: How a Tiny Caste of Oxford Tories Took Over the UK
Simon Kuper
(Profile Books, £16.99)

does not a great politician make: indeed what he describes as the ‘privileging of rhetoric over facts or expertise’ is behind many of the disastrous policy failures of the past few years. On the other, he sometimes comes across as rather too much in awe of skills honed in the student debating chamber. He rather meanly takes aim at Keir Starmer, suggesting that the Labour leader’s lack of involvement in the Union when he was a postgraduate at Oxford had left him at a disadvantage: “Starmer is a forensic speaker but a dull and unfunny one, with a nasal voice.”

Personally, I’d rather have Labour politicians who speak from the heart rather than Tory ones whose Oxford training becomes the excuse for misogynistic attacks in the press (as per the Daily Mail’s disgraceful attempt earlier this year to suggest Angela Rayner was flashing her legs because she supposedly couldn’t compete with Johnson’s Oxford Union debating skills at PMQs).

As the Rayner incident showed all too clearly, we are still a long way from shaking off the classist and sexist attitudes that persist among products of our country’s public schools and elite universities.

Oxford has made efforts in the last few years to broaden its intake, making contextual offers to take account of disadvantage. It has had some impact: the number of Etonians offered an Oxford place fell from 99 in 2014 to 48 in 2021. Yet Kuper says he does not have faith in the institution to reform itself sufficiently. He has a radical solution – close Oxford (and Cambridge) to undergraduate teaching, instead making them centres of excellence for postgraduates, and for retraining those who missed out on higher education. It’s an interesting idea, although I would argue that Kuper is too quick to dismiss the idea that private schools too need to be addressed if we are to make real strides in creating a fairer country. Still, if you’re looking to understand why we are in the mess we are in, this book is a good place to start. **F**

Creating real change

Carl Wright's career in trade unionism, diplomacy and local government shows it is still possible to lead a 'Fabian life', argues *Owen Tudor*



Owen Tudor, a former Fabian executive committee member and chair of the Young Fabians, is deputy general secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation and a member of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative UK board

Carl Wright's long career has seen him move from the European Commission through international trade unionism to the Commonwealth and eventually the international dimension of local government. If a week is a long time in politics, imagine what 50 years feels like. But his entertaining and vivid depiction of the different aspects of his long career contains a common thread of one key aspect of Fabianism: the possibility that gradual change can have a qualitative impact on people's lives. Certainly never a practicing or even theorising revolutionary, Carl Wright charts how much has changed, and – tentatively and humbly – shows rather than tells how he played a part in some of it.

Starting as one of the original UK delegation to the European Commission in the early 1970s, a bruising experience for a first job, Carl moved on to the then International Confederation of Free Trade Unions working in particular on the comparatively new challenge of how to deal with multinational enterprises. He wrote the global union policy on industrial democracy adopted at the ICFTU Congress in Mexico in 1975 and then wrote the first ICFTU report on social clauses in international trade agreements. Working with Australian union leader and subsequently one of the lucky country's iconic prime ministers, Bob Hawke, Carl then became in 1980 the first director of the Commonwealth Trade Union Council (CTUC), beginning an engagement with the Commonwealth that he has maintained ever since.

His memory, as this work shows, is encyclopedic, but worn lightly: I remember he introduced me to some Commonwealth officials a few years ago where I argued that the Commonwealth should hold a meeting of Labour ministers at the annual ILO Conference. Carl coughed and mentioned quietly that in the 1980s, the CTUC had actually convened such a regular meeting on behalf of the Commonwealth Secretariat.



**Global Citizen:
Grass roots
activism and
high diplomacy**
Carl Wright
(HANSIB, £18.99)

Through the CTUC and then at the Commonwealth Secretariat itself, (no easy place for a Labour supporter under Margaret Thatcher and then John Major) Carl was as integral to the development of a free and independent trade union movement in South Africa as it was possible for an outsider to be (his work was recognised by Desmond Tutu as well as by the founding leaders of the Congress of South African Trade Unions). His recollections emphasise how important the non-racial (but predominantly Black) trade union movement was in freeing South Africa. He explains the CTUC's role in proposing the compromise at the Nassau CHOGM in 1985 that saw comprehensive sanctions traded off for the release of Nelson Mandela and real negotiations with him and the ANC. The Commonwealth's finest hour was in reality a particularly Fabian mixture of practical proposals that created big changes.

Meeting world leaders like Helen Clark and Wim Kok, and engaging in global events, Carl travelled the world, but (almost) always in the cheap seats.

In 1994, Carl left the Commonwealth Secretariat, where he was clearly frustrated by those who preferred inertia to progress, and led the creation of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) – a truly Fabian-style institution. The role of localism in international politics is a curious dialectic, but Carl made it work over his 22 years as CLGF secretary general, working with local, national and global politicians to give life to the slogan 'think global, act local'.

Carl Wright's recollections of a half century are an entertaining and personal account of how a Fabian life can be lived without the badge (although he has been a Fabian throughout and indeed wrote a Fabian pamphlet back in the 1970s) His book is honest enough to admit that our friends are not always right, and crucially teaches us that the lessons we can draw from being wrong are often the most instructive. **F**

RESEARCH ROUND-UP

A mature approach

Fabian research on older voters shows that Labour has a lot of ground to make up – but there are signs of hope

IT IS A truth universally acknowledged that Labour will need to build a broad-based coalition if it is to win the next election. Inner-city constituencies, suburban seats and ‘Red Wall’ towns will all need to swing behind the party – and appealing to voters of all ages will be crucial if this mix of seats is to be secured.

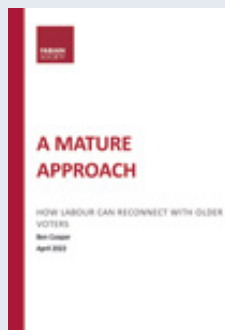
Younger voters were said to have been responsible for the ‘youthquake’ in support of Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour in 2017 (although some have disputed the extent to which this phenomenon was real). But the trends among older voters have been much less discussed. And while some commentators have argued that Labour should concentrate its attention on its younger support, it is becoming clearer that relying on the youth vote is a risky strategy, particularly as they are both less likely to vote and disproportionately concentrated in seats the party already holds.

The Fabian Society’s report, *A Mature Approach*, took an in-depth look at how Labour can create fresh connections with those aged 55 and over. It is a significant challenge: between 2010 and 2019, the number of votes cast for Labour by people aged 55 and over fell by an estimated 900,000, while at the same time the Conservative party gained nearly 3 million additional votes from people in this age group. There are some reasons for optimism however. An estimated 2 million older voters in Great Britain did not support Labour in 2019 but would consider doing so now – and among these ‘new considerers’ Labour now leads on every single one of the 24 policy areas which will be key to winning a general election.

For the report, Fabian Society senior researcher Ben Cooper spoke to some of the older voters who might vote Labour next time in a number of different constituencies: Sedgefield, Bury North, Bridgend, Norwich North, Erewash, Stoke on Trent Central and North and Newcastle-under-Lyme. They told him they wanted Labour to focus on fiscal credibility and security in all its forms. The party should also set out a clear policy offer – and they were particularly keen on

cutting NHS waiting lists, a strong plan for social care, reassurance on the state pension, more police and action on crime, improving local environments and the high street and more secure and well-skilled local jobs in the local economy.

To win their support, Labour will need policies that cut through – but it is clear that this is all to play for and that the older vote is both valuable and winnable. With the cost of living crisis starting to bite, the party needs to show it has real solutions on offer. **F**



Equipped for the Future

High-quality training is the key to the economy of the future. A skilled workforce brings with it a more resilient economy and better prospects for all. And with fast-paced technological change and growing climate change pressures, it is crucial to ensure people have the green skills of the future. In this publication, a range of politicians and policymakers put forward solutions to the skills challenge.

The collection features a foreword by David Blunkett and contributions from Josh Abey, Fiona Aldridge, Bhavina Bharkhada, Kate Dearden, Jeff Greenidge, Jane Hickie, David Hughes, Amanda Mackenzie, Elena Magrini, Michael Marra MSP, Paul Nowak, Amy Solder and Mike Watson.

A Mature Approach: How Labour Can Reconnect with Older Voters is available at www.fabians.org.uk



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Ahead of his time

Arthur Lewis was a pioneering economist from Saint Lucia who forged strong ties with the Fabian Society. His contributions to development economics, for which he won a Nobel Prize in 1979, are just as relevant today, writes *Junius Olivier*



Junius Olivier is an undergraduate tutor in economics at the London School of Economics

IN 1934 ARTHUR Lewis arrived in London from his tiny island homeland of Saint Lucia to pursue a Bachelor of Commerce degree at the London School of Economics – at the time a relatively young school founded by prominent members of the Fabian Society.

Lewis, concerned with improving the social and economic conditions of his people, found a natural home in the Fabian Society. As a social democrat, Lewis was welcomed by the Fabians who afforded him an intellectual space where his ideas on the labour movement in

the Caribbean at the time were embraced, refined, and published. One of his earliest publications, titled *Labour in the West Indies*, was first published by the Fabian Society in 1938 and signalled his focus on social and labour issues.

As a member of the Fabian Society, Lewis would go on to publish several papers concerned with politics, social policy, and economic planning. His time as a Fabian coincided with a meteoric rise from a freshly minted PhD graduate to a pioneer in the field of development economics.

The work of Arthur Lewis continues to be as relevant today as it was when he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1979. The brilliance of his ideas cannot be overstated.

Lewis' dual sector model continues to form the blueprint from which developing countries design policies that allow for the type of structural transformation necessary for economic development. The recent success of East Asian states in growing their economies can be traced back to key elements of Lewis' dual sector model, with its focus on technology adoption and the reinvestment of surpluses generated during the development process.

Structural change and structural transformation – the core of Lewis' seminal work – are robust themes in the economics of development. Through these concepts, Lewis' thinking continues to be applied to contemporary development issues.

What's more, the development challenges posed by the twin crises of climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic may be mitigated through the adoption of Lewis' ideas. In the face of these two crises, small developing states are challenged by increased risk of destruction of capital and livelihoods from extreme weather events, threats to food security, increasing inflation, increasing production costs as supply chain disruptions lead to increasing commodity prices, revenue loss from the decrease in tourism demand and the loss in productive capacity.

For Lewis, a regional approach was critical in protecting small, developing states against such shocks – and this continues to be a viable institutional approach for the Caribbean economy. As Lewis argued, such a process allows the region's industries to take advantage of economies of scale, by allowing their economies to have access to a larger market and move away from more expensive international inputs through greater regional labour and capital mobility.

This would also result in a much-welcomed reduction in regional production costs. Furthermore, a regional approach to the development of the agriculture sector also allows for cost sharing in the research and development of productivity enhancing methods, leading to improved food security.

In his dual sector model, Lewis – being an educator himself – highlighted the importance of education and training of a skilled labour force. This remains critical for a post-Covid recovery. It is key to increasing productivity and the returns on capital investment, and to fostering the development of ideas and the technical skills necessary for development in a climate-constrained world.

Another salient feature of Lewis' work is his argument for government agencies to take an active role in coordinating the planning and development process. He saw the state as critically important for inclusive growth – and he was right: the Covid-19 pandemic and climate crisis have only reinforced the need for improved state capacity in both protecting developing economies from external shocks and kickstarting economic activity as part of the economic recovery.

Jamaican academic Norman Girvan described Arthur Lewis as “a man of his time; and ahead of his time.” There has never been a more apt description of the man.

Lewis' legacy looms large. As the first Black professor in Britain, the first person of African descent to win a Nobel Prize in a field other than literature or peace and the first Black full-time professor at Princeton, Lewis was a trailblazer for Caribbean people. And as the first West Indian principal at the University College of the West Indies, the first vice chancellor of the University of the West Indies, and the first President of the Caribbean Development Bank, Lewis was a man of his people. He remains an uneclipsed source of inspiration to the generations of Black intellectuals that followed. ■

The development challenges posed by the twin crises of climate change and Covid-19 may be mitigated through the adoption of Lewis' ideas

Listings

ANNOUNCEMENT

Fabian Society events

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

BIRMINGHAM & WEST MIDLANDS

Contact Luke John Davies at bhamfabians@gmail.com

BOURNEMOUTH & DISTRICT

Meetings at the Friends Meeting House, Wharncliffe Road, Bournemouth

Sunday 17 July: Trip to Tolpuddle Martyrs memorial festival and rally. For details and tickets, contact Ian Taylor, 01202 396634 or taylorbournemouth@gmail.com

BRIGHTON & HOVE

Contact Stephen Ottaway stephenottaway1@gmail.com for details

CENTRAL LONDON

Contact Michael Weatherburn at londonfabians@gmail.com and website londonfabians.org.uk

CHISWICK & WEST LONDON

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

COLCHESTER

Contact Maurice Austin – Maurice.austin@phonecoop.coop

COUNTY DURHAM

Saturday meetings take place at our new venue, St. Paul's Hall, Meadowfield, Durham City, DH7 8RP. No membership required on your first visit. Contact Professor Alan Townsend at alan.townsend1939@gmail.com

CROYDON & SUTTON

Contact Emily Brothers – info@emilybrothers.com

ENFIELD FABIANS

Contact Andrew Gilbert at enfieldfabians@gmail.com

FINCHLEY

Contact Sam Jacobs at Sam.Jacobs@netapp.com

HAVERING

Contact Davis Marshall at haveringfabians@outlook.com

HORNSEY & WOOD GREEN

Contact Mark Cooke at hwgfabians@gmail.com

NEWHAM

Contact Mike Reader at mike.reader99@gmail.com

NORTHUMBRIA AREA

Contact Pat Hobson at pathobson@hotmail.com

PETERBOROUGH

Contact Brian Keegan at brian@keeganpeterborough.com

READING & DISTRICT

Contact Tony Skuse at tony@skuse.net

RUGBY

Contact John Goodman at rugbyfabians@myphone.coop

SOUTH TYNESIDE

Contact Paul Freeman at southtynesidefabians@gmail.com

SUFFOLK

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

TONBRIDGE & TUNBRIDGE WELLS

Contact Martin Clay at Martin.clay@btinternet.com

WALSALL

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

YORK

Contact Mary Cannon at yorkfabiansociety@gmail.com

FABIAN QUIZ

THE BLUE COMMONS: RESCUING THE ECONOMY OF THE SEA

Guy Standing



Planet Earth is mostly blue – about 70 per cent of the earth's surface is covered by the oceans, which provide half of the oxygen we breathe and about three-quarters of all life on Earth. But

who owns the sea? About 40 per cent of the world's population lives in coastal communities and depend on ocean resources. Yet over the 20th century governments and corporations around the world have pushed the fatally flawed maxim of 'blue growth', and as a result nearly all fish stocks are either fully or over-exploited.

In the neoliberal era, it has been extensively enclosed and privatised, generating multiple inequalities. A system of rentier capitalism now dominates human activity in the sea, based on privatisation, financial capital and a drive for profit over people and ecosystems.

The Blue Commons peels back the veil of the boundless exploitation and corruption. The scale of the problem in our oceans is revealed here for the first time, as well as our one solution for reversing it: building a blue commons alternative, prioritising ordinary people around the world and the health of our oceans.

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

What was the name of the government's flagship bill passed in 2020 and widely critiqued for not going far enough on sustainable fishing?

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

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