

# Labour's Reset The Path Back to Power

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What Labour needs to do  
to win the next election

Labour  
UNCUT

# **Labour's Reset: The Path Back to Power**

## Foreword

Labour Uncut has spent the last decade giving candid, often blunt advice to Labour's leaders. We start from a position that opposition is pointless, government is what matters and Labour only wins elections from the centre.

The purpose of this book is to help light the path back into government. It charts a course from Labour's predicament today and negatives which need to be addressed through the actions that can be taken while in opposition, to the type of policy platform which could win an election.

The range of contributors draws together decades of experience in politics and the Labour party at every level. Most importantly, this is experience which involves winning elections.

Each of the pieces in this book will be posted at [www.labour-uncut.co.uk](http://www.labour-uncut.co.uk). If you agree, disagree or just want to vent, come to the site and tell us what you think.

*Atul Hatwal, editor, Labour Uncut*

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## **Part I: The mountain to climb**

# **Chapter 1: New polling shows target voters think they'll be better off under Labour...but Corbyn and his legacy block the path to switching**

by Atul Hatwal

The good news is that a quarter of non-Labour voters would consider backing Keir Starmer's party at the next election. This group think that they'll be better off under Labour than the Conservatives and the open wound of Brexit, so damaging in 2019, appears to be healing – a plurality don't think Labour will try reverse it.

But, obviously, there's a but.

Jeremy Corbyn and his legacy is blocking the path to switching to Labour. 66% of non-Labour voters considering backing Labour are worried about the ongoing influence of Corbynites, just over half think Labour hasn't addressed its problems with anti-Semitism, half believe Labour is more concerned with minorities than people like them and a majority think the party is too close to the unions and anti-business.

These negatives need to be tackled to open the road for switchers to complete their journey in voting Labour.

To understand the issues faced by Labour, *Uncut* worked with the pollster Yonder and adopted a three part approach

1. Size the total pool of Labour's potential support
2. Understand how close this group is to voting Labour
3. Identify the extent of specific barriers preventing them from supporting Labour

## **Labour's potential support**

Yonder conducted polling on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> September, with a nationally representative panel of 2,010 respondents. To size Labour's potential support, voters were asked who they'd back in an election and all non-Labour voters were asked whether they would consider supporting Labour at the next election. Just over 1 in 4 (26%) answered yes, this group equated to 18% of the overall electorate.

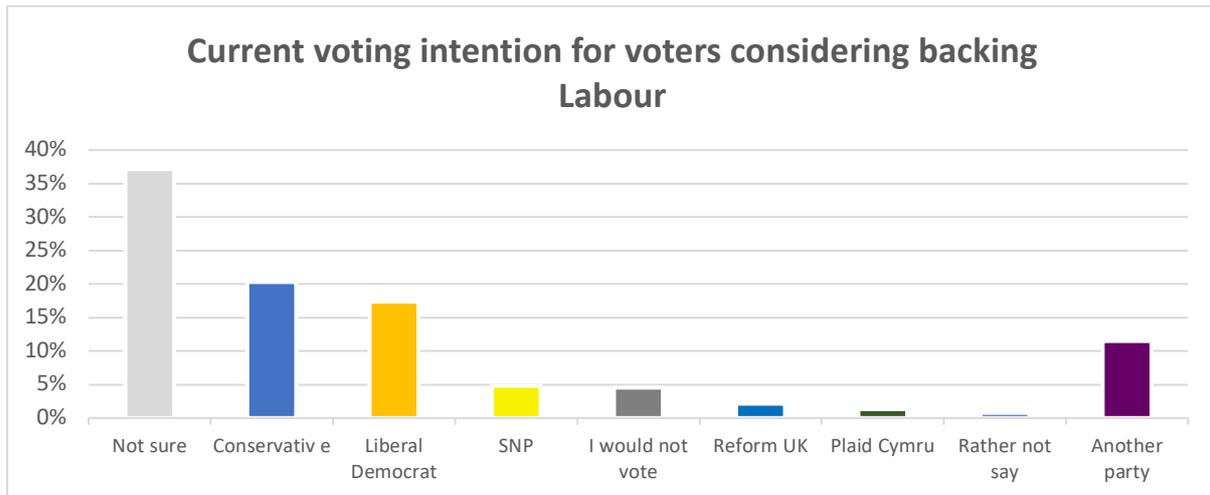
In terms of composition of this group, there are two positives and two negatives.

First, its numerically reasonably high and gives Labour a path to a majority government even without winning every last member of the group. More on that later.

Second the majority are in the 25-54 age range (56%) and spread relatively evenly through each decade in that range. Labour is appealing to people at different stages of life and has the opportunity to build a broad electoral base.

Less positive is that numbers of potential switchers tail off markedly in older age groups. Among the 55-64 group, only 19% of non-Labour voters would consider switching while among 65+ it's just 17%. In comparison for 35-44 and 45-54, 29% of non-Labour voters would consider switching. Because of the skew towards higher turnout among older voters, the bald truth is that in British politics their support is worth more because they are so much more likely to vote.

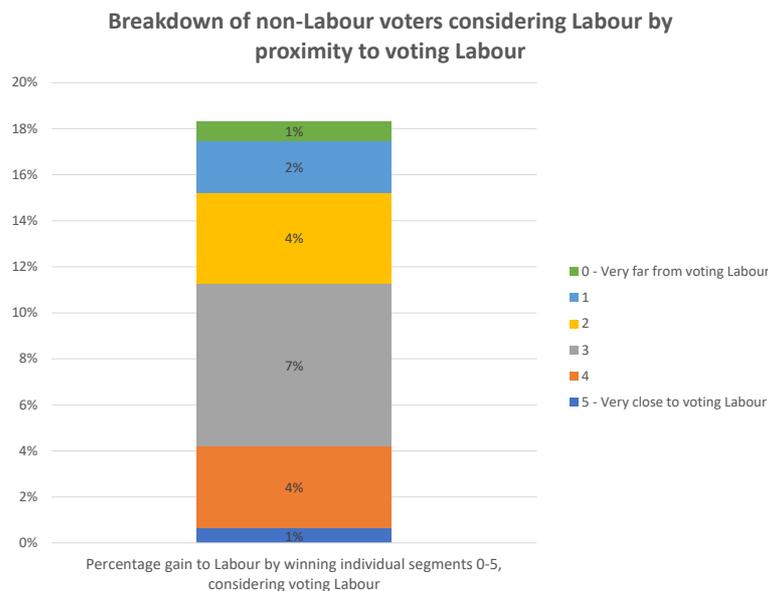
The bulk of this group is also from voters who are undecided, followed by the Conservatives.



The poll sample was not weighted for voting intention – when pollsters release voting intention figures there’s a bit of expert magic applied which can involve things like reallocating a proportion of undecided voters based on their past votes – so the undecideds are likely slightly high and parties slightly low. However, given the importance of winning over Conservative voters – they tend to vote and a switch from Tory to Labour counts double, it reduces their total and boosts Labour – Labour would ideally want a bigger pool of Conservatives than 1 in 7.

### Proximity to voting Labour

All non-Labour voters who said that they would consider backing Labour were asked to place themselves on a scale of 0-5 where 0 was very far from supporting Labour and 5 was very close.



If Labour won all of these voters, the party would be on track to a vote share in the high forties, landslide territory. It is highly unlikely this could be achieved in any circumstance but even winning two thirds of switchers would deliver a Labour government.

But Labour is going to have to work to win these voters. The key takeaway from these figures is that switchers aren't just going to fall into Keir Starmer's lap.

The majority of the group rate themselves as reasonably and quite far from voting Labour in groups 3 and 2. The quick wins, among those who classify themselves as 5 and 4, very close and close to voting Labour would likely still leave the party in opposition in the mid to low thirties in terms of vote share.

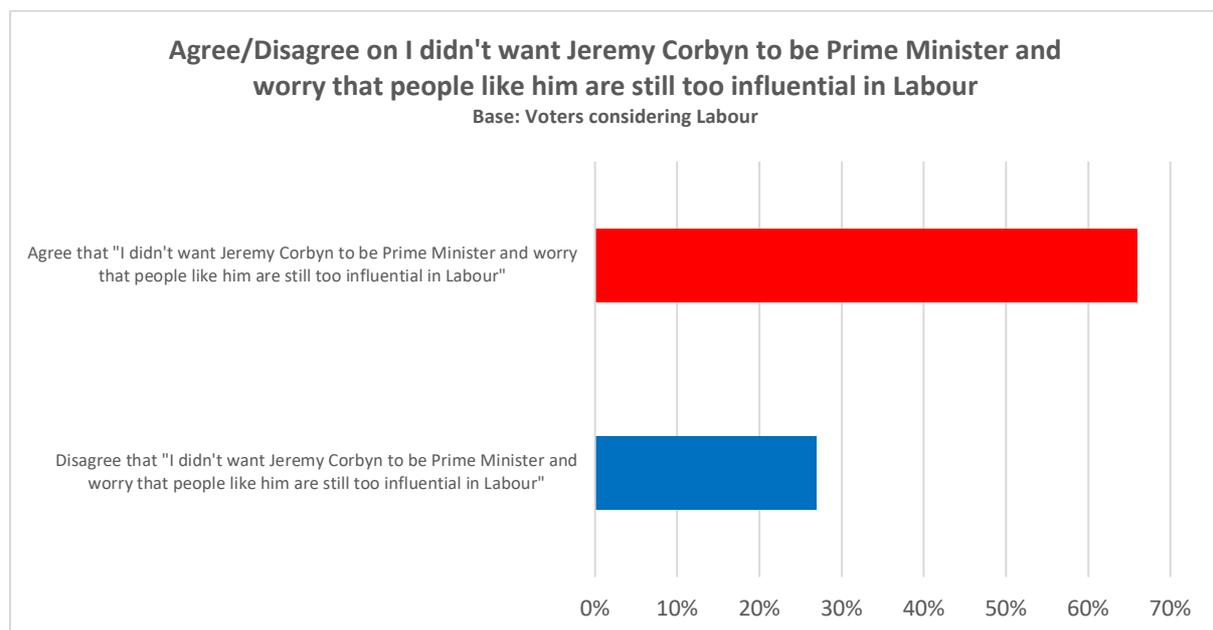
To win the groups who will make the difference between opposition and Downing Street, Labour will need visible and material action to tackle the negatives blocking their path to switching.

### The barriers to voting Labour

Voters were presented with a series of statements, drawn from previous research, that describe Labour's negatives and asked whether they agreed or disagreed on a scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The research focused on specific characteristics of Labour to build on the regular cycle of public preference for leader and management of the economy.

*Ooh Jeremy Corbyn!*

Jeremy Corbyn and his ongoing influence stand out as the single biggest negative about Labour.



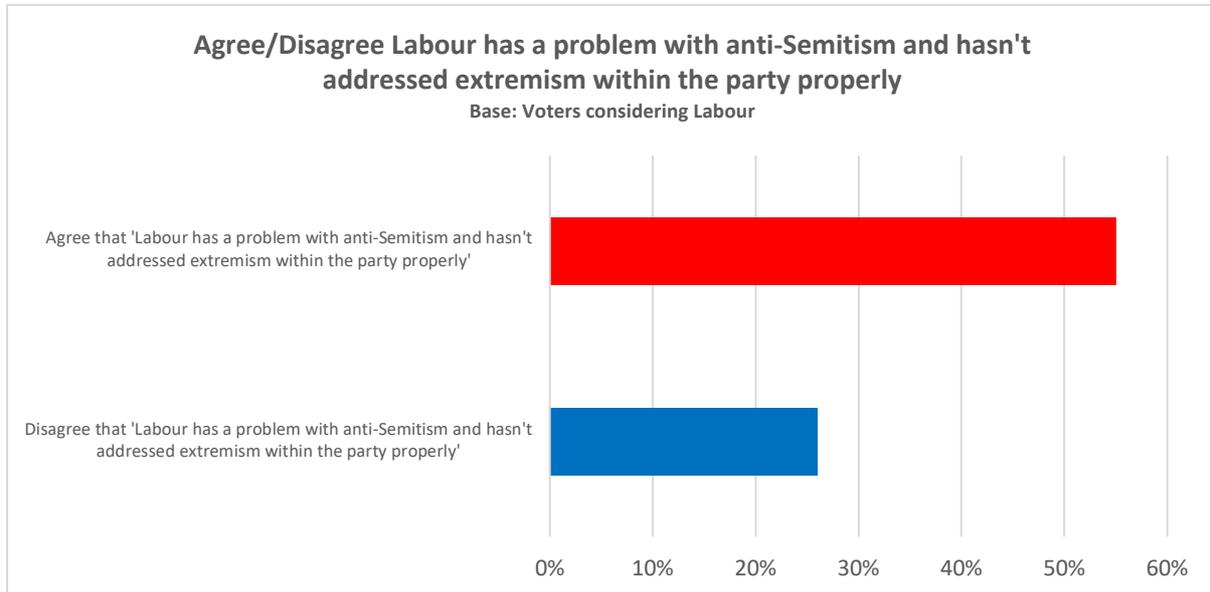
A net +39% of potential Labour switchers agreed with the statement, "I didn't want Jeremy Corbyn as leader and worry that people like him are still too influential in Labour." Over half of this group said they 'strongly agreed' with this statement. Even among those closer to voting Labour, in groups 5,4 and 3 who would have a more positive view of Labour's ex-leader, the majority was +20%

Little is as important for Labour as demonstrating to switchers that Jeremy Corbyn is a figure of the past.

The impact of his brand is evident in the three subsequent negatives with which Labour switchers agree.

### *Antisemitism*

Labour remains heavily identified with antisemitism.

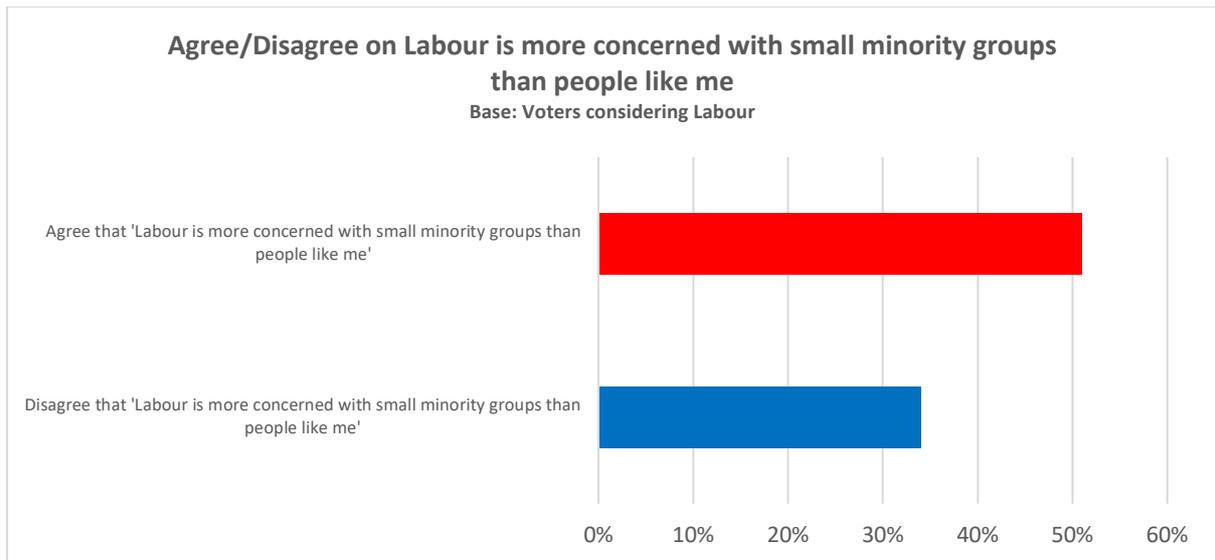


By 55% to 26%, a net majority of +29% of potential Labour switchers agreed with the statement that 'Labour has a problem with anti-Semitism and hasn't addressed extremism within the party properly'.

While in itself it is probably not a basis for blocking large numbers of switchers beyond members of the Jewish community, it is a marker to voters of a party that is racist, one which wavering voters' would need to have an explicit justification and rationale to support. Antisemitism occupies space in terms of voter perceptions of Labour that positions the party outside of the anti-racist mainstream and creates yet another barrier to overcome in attracting voters.

### *Who Labour represents*

This definition of Labour as not part of the mainstream is underpinned by voter perception that "Labour is more concerned with small minority groups than people like me".

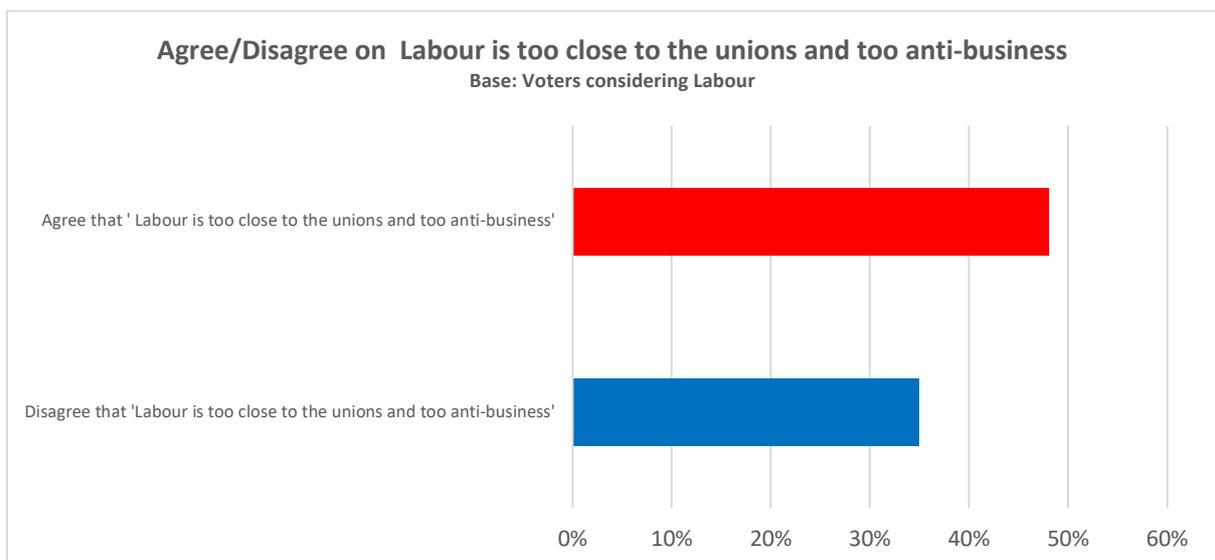


A net +18% of potential Labour voters agreed with this proposition and this maybe evidence of the impact of culture wars and ‘woke’ on how the public views the party. While issues in this space tend not to be vote determining, apart from for the groups involved in each niche debate, the general noise and debate does communicate something about Labour’s priorities and what it’s focused upon.

That said, among the three groups of potential switchers closest to voting Labour who classified themselves as 5,4 and 3 on the 0-5 scale, there’s a narrow majority that *disagrees* with the statement by 6% suggesting that this is not quite the potent issue in terms of repelling Labour switchers that some in the Conservative party believe.

*Labour and business*

Labour’s relationship with business has been a historic negative and in the context of a party recently led by its most left-wing leader in generations, perhaps the surprise here is that the majority among potential Labour switchers agreeing with the statement is not higher.

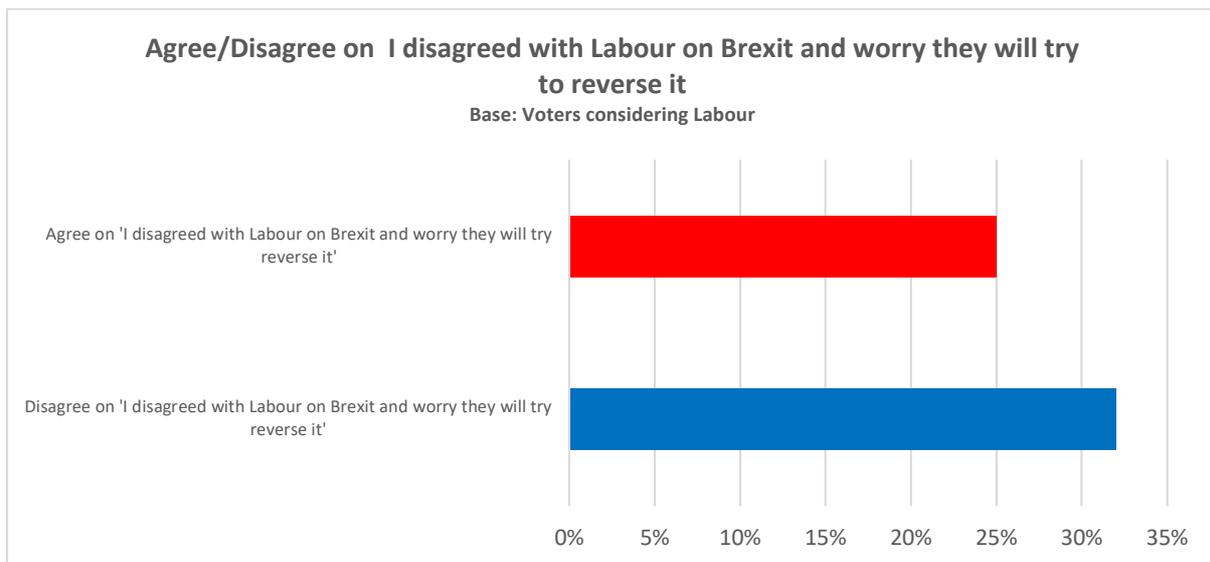


While +13% agreeing that Labour is too close to the unions and anti-business is far from ideal, the bulk of those (71%) who did support the statement opted for “Slightly Agree” in the

survey rather than “Strongly Agree”. For the groups of potential Labour switchers nearer to voting Labour, in groups 5,4 and 3 on the scale of 0-5, there’s a healthy 11% majority disagreeing with the statement. Despite Jeremy Corbyn and perhaps because of this government’s attitude to business, Labour appears to have a real opportunity to position itself as a ‘partner’ to business, as Keir Starmer wrote in his 11,500 Fabian essay.

*Brexit*

One of the positive results from the polling conducted for Uncut was on attitudes towards Labour and Brexit. Clearly this was a major issue in 2019 and combined with Jeremy Corbyn served to drive voters towards the Conservatives. Based on the data from this survey, it seems Brexit as an issue is receding and losing its salience.

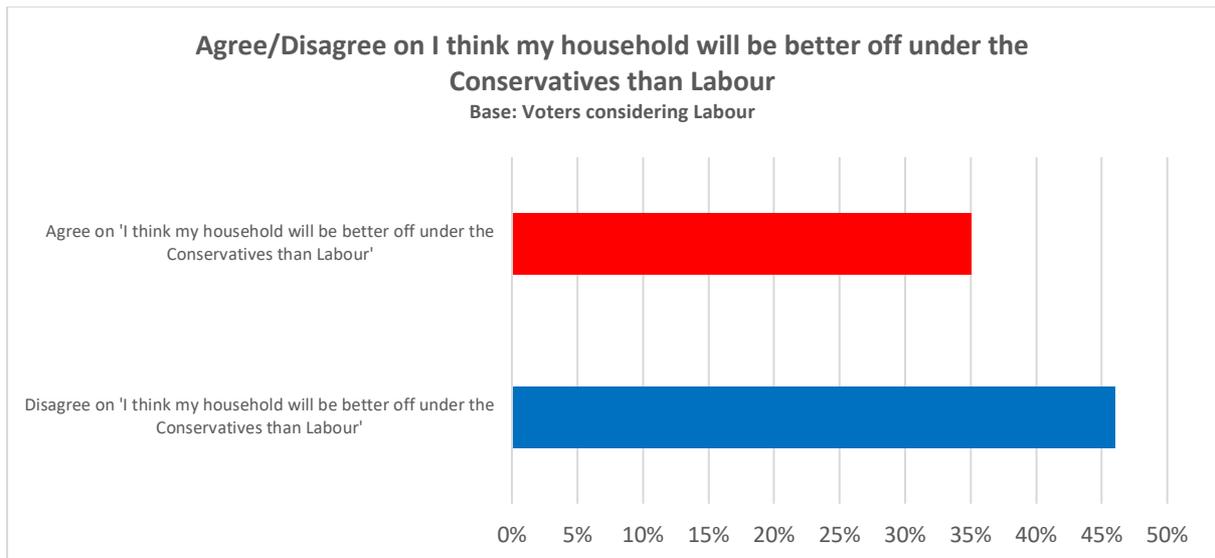


A 6% majority of potential Labour switchers did not support the proposition 'I disagreed with Labour on Brexit and worry they will try reverse it'. Delving deeper into the figures, over half of this group (55%) either disagreed or were neutral on the statement.

For Labour’s switchers, it looks like they believe that Brexit got done and Labour will not reverse it. They seem to be in a similar place to 2017 in terms of their views on Labour and Brexit. Not only does this remove a key negative from the 2019 election, it opens up the potential for Labour to be more robust in challenging the terms of the government’s Brexit deal.

*Which party is best for households’ finances*

Probably the most striking finding from this research was the extent to which voters considering backing Labour believe that, for all the negatives, their households will be better off under Labour than the Conservatives.



There's net 11% majority among potential Labour switchers who believe this, a number which rises to a huge 40% majority among the three groups closest to voting Labour, voters who had classified themselves as 5, 4 and 3 on the scale of 0-5 in terms of proximity to supporting the party.

Out of all of the polling analysis this is the greatest source of hope. Labour has an underlying wallet appeal to switchers that it has rarely had before.

## Conclusion

The story of Labour in the 2019 election was voters being turned off by Jeremy Corbyn and Brexit. The former is now gone from the Labour leadership and the latter seems to be receding in importance. The message from this analysis is that the path to switching to Labour runs through a clear repudiation of the Corbyn era such that voters ongoing concerns over his influence are assuaged and a repositioning of Labour, once again, in the mainstream of British politics.

The markers for this redefinition would be stamping out antisemitism, rebalancing the party's public focus so its less caught up in culture wars and talks more about the core issues for all voters such as jobs, housing and public services and making the most of the opportunity to steal some of the Tories clothes on being the party backed by business.

If Labour can make reposition itself in this way then the huge benefit of being seen as the party to make target voters better off can help convert potential switchers into actual Labour voters.

*Atul Hatwal is the editor of Labour Uncut*

## **Chapter 2: Do not expect buyer's remorse – it is going to take hard slog to rebuild the Red Wall**

**by Jo Platt**

People in Leigh call their neighbours in Wigan 'pie eaters'. It is not a comment on their culinary habits; it refers to the 1926 general strike where Wigan miners were said to have gone back to work sooner than those in Leigh. It is hardly surprising, then, that the parliamentary seat was solidly Labour from 1922 onwards. (And Liberal before that, with the *Manchester Guardian* owner, CP Scott, once representing the town.)

That was, of course, until November 2019. I was the unfortunate losing candidate – after first being elected in 2017 – as Labour was mown down, not only in dozens of so-called 'Red Wall' seats, but in the traditional coal and steel seats that today have Conservative MPs.

### **Coal and steel seats**

For Leigh, read Bassetlaw, Blyth Valley, Bolsover, Redcar, Rother Valley or Penistone and Stocksbridge. These are places where Labour is in the local DNA, but they all fell to the Tories, many for the first time in decades, if not the first time ever. In fact, if it was not for the Brexit party splitting the Conservative vote, things would have been much worse and we would have lost dozens more seats, with even places like Barnsley – the epicentre of the Miner's Strike – in danger of turning blue. (The absence of the Brexit party helps to explain why we lost the Hartlepool by-election in May.) All of which is an around about way of saying that we should count our blessings. The hole we find ourselves in as a party could have been even deeper.

### **Horrific campaign**

Let me return to the 2019 campaign. Our experience on the doorstep was just awful. In fact, horrific is the word I would use. It was a hot reception – and, also, an icy one. Hot in that everyone seemed angry. The voters had turned against us emphatically, and there were lots of slammed doors and raised voices. Icy, too, because even people I knew personally were telling me they could not vote Labour and were just sorry this would mean I bore the brunt and that this was 'Nothing personal'.

People I did not know first-hand were considerably less polite. Every door we knocked on was critical of the leadership and every other door was angry about our position on Brexit. Throw in a few local issues and you had the perfect storm, with Labour, both nationally and locally unpopular, and a big, divisive issue like Brexit that we were on the wrong side of.

You could sense the mood harden after the party conference in 2018. Emails to the office and social media responses became noticeably more antagonistic. Our position on Brexit – where we promised to renegotiate the Conservatives' deal and put the outcome to a second referendum along with an option to remain – was utterly toxic. Voters thought we were taking them for fools. Our position at the 2017 election made more sense. Brexit had happened, and we needed to accept it and move on. That is what voters wanted to hear from us. Now, we were trying to usurp their decision, as they saw it.

Neither did they think we were credible as a party of government. It was as simple as that, and perceptions of Jeremy were horrendous. You could sense the Tories' attack messaging was cutting through. 'He's an IRA sympathiser' was just one of the comments that routinely came up. Of course, the media's concerted demonisation of him hardly helped, but we were not in good enough shape nationally to rebut the criticisms. Locally, they stuck.

We also had too much policy. It often felt like the *Generation Game*, with commitment after commitment passing along a conveyor belt. Yet on some really important issues, such as Universal Credit, which is massively important to many poorer families in Leigh, we only had a bureaucratic response, promising to eventually get rid of it but conceding that ‘major policy change can’t be delivered overnight.’

In places like Leigh, and in many other northern heartland areas, people have real problems that require urgent attention. There is a lack of jobs, housing, and access to decent public services as well as problems with crime. They want practical solutions from politicians. It is not enough to ‘make a point’ or to ‘stand for something’ we need to get things done and make a tangible difference. Yet we totally lacked focus. I even had a woman who was extremely animated about a manifesto pledge we had about planting more trees. ‘What bloody good is that to me?’ she complained.

## **Repairing the damage**

Is the spell between Labour and the northern working-class broken? Yes, I think it is. Can we fix the damage? Yes, but things will not simply snap back into shape. It would be a mistake to think 2019 was just an aberration. We need to be clear: the destruction of so much of our political heartland was not simply the result of Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership and Brexit. Both were big factors and are ‘off the books’ for next time, but the rot set in a long time ago.

Those who think our traditional voters had nowhere else to go need to think again. And many in the party did think there was no other choice for our working-class supporters than to dutifully keep on voting Labour, election after election. Memories of the Tories were often enough to pull them back into line, but that simply does not work anymore. So we need to mature the relationship, move away from blithely assuming people in places like Leigh will back us, regardless, and start providing them with clear reasons to do so.

We need to deliver transformational economic change. Boris Johnson’s claim about ‘levelling up’ needs to be shown-up for the empty slogan it is; but let us also force him onto our ground and offer a clear alternative to voters in response. There is still a palpable sense of loss about the decline of previous industries, which, while hard to work in, still provided people with stability, decent wages, job opportunities and the chance to bring up their families in close-knit communities with shared values and institutions. Our MPs need to be changemakers locally and be instrumental in bringing jobs and investment to their constituencies.

I live in Leigh and I am not going anywhere. I have dusted myself down, got back up, and I am now involved with a new co-operative movement, breathing life into Leigh [Spinners Mill](#). We have a range of small businesses, groups and leisure providers working together to give the community a valuable new resource while also rescuing our heritage. It is one of the finest examples of a surviving cotton mill, and a constant reminder for the town of how working-class community was formed here and thrived.

So this is where we start again. At the grassroots. Being active in our communities. Making a difference. Rebuilding our credibility. Labour can recover in the Red Wall – even in the coal and steel seats – but we must not assume that voters there will have buyer’s remorse about their decision in 2019. It is going to take determination, focus and hard slog to recover what we have lost.

*Jo Platt was the Labour MP for Leigh (2017–2019).*

## **Chapter 3: We need Tory to Labour switchers. If we do not attract them, we will lose. It is as simple as that.**

**by Patrick Heneghan**

It is a well-known saying that being Leader of the Opposition is probably the hardest job in British politics. It is a huge role with massive responsibilities yet without the real power to make things happen in the country. It is a role where most people fail. Of the last ten opposition leaders, only two have made it into Downing Street – a rather pitiful strike rate of just 20%.

Undoubtedly, the unique circumstances of the global pandemic have made things much harder for Keir Starmer. He was elected just weeks after a national lockdown and against a media backdrop dominated by the pandemic and the Government's response to it. As we hopefully emerge to some sort of normality, Labour will be taking a hard look at the task ahead. It is no exaggeration to say that on the numbers alone, a Labour majority Government is probably a harder task to achieve than at any point in post-war history.

The creation of new constituencies for the next election will likely make things very marginally harder for Labour overall but not so much that an analysis of the current electoral terrain is not a useful place to start when seeking to understand the scale of the challenge ahead.

We start from a low base – with just 202 seats won in 2019, Labour needs to gain 124 just to get an overall majority of one. It is an unprecedented challenge for a Labour leader this side of the Second World War. It requires a direct swing from the Tories of 13% across the country – again, to put this in context, that would be the largest post war swing (for any party) in British politics, surpassing the swings that delivered both Blair and Attlee landslide majorities, and in Starmer's case, this level of swing would still only achieve a majority of one.

With the required gains unlikely from the SNP or the Lib Dems (they only won 11 seats last time), it will be Labour's performance in Tory held seats that will determine Starmer's success. If you rank the 124 required gains in Tory held seats by the swing required, then intriguingly, you find that seat 123 is Jacob Rees Mogg's constituency of Bath and North East Somerset, where he sits on a very comfortable majority just shy of 15,000 votes.

Without doubt, this is an electoral mountain to climb, and in all likelihood the bookmakers are correct when they estimate Labour having less than a 17% probability of achieving an overall majority. More than anything else, the impact of not being able to count on more than a single Scottish seat has created a situation where a Labour majority Government seems distant. Without massive political change north of the border, Labour now finds itself in a position where its only likely route to power is at the head of some form of multi-party arrangement.

That being the case, what do the other benchmarks look like. Using the current constituencies and Uniform National Swing (UNS), Labour becoming the largest party requires 82 gains direct from the Tories – that is an 8% swing from the Tories to Labour. A swing of 5.4% from the Tories would deliver Labour 54 direct gains and just about produce a scenario where Labour could potentially lead an anti-Tory government with support from other parties. In terms of majorities, these two benchmarks range between 3,000 and 8,500 votes.

By any historical measure, the task ahead is daunting. A Labour majority government looks virtually impossible without significant change in Scotland. But Keir Starmer as Prime Minister is possible if Labour can deliver the types of swings needed to gain seats direct from the Tories in England and Wales. It is in that context that the most important aim for the next election needs to be achieving large-scale switching directly from the Tories to Labour.

Of course, there is political and electoral value in reaching out to all types of voters, including new voters, but with the first-past-the-post system we have, it will be the number of Tory Switchers that determines whether Keir Starmer makes it to Number 10 or not.

In our electoral system, it is swing that wins elections. The reality is that because we are looking to gain seats from the Tories, getting a single voter to switch directly to Labour from Conservative in a Conservative held marginal is worth double that of gaining an extra vote from anywhere else. It is as simple as that.

For those who think we need to recreate the coalition of 2017, we need to consider that in terms of swing, 2017 was far from great. Yes, Labour's vote share went up, but so did the Tories'. The direct swing from the Tories was just 2%. The Labour vote was the highest since the landslide win in 2001, yet the number of seats won was virtually the same as by Gordon Brown in 2010.

In 2017, the Tory vote increased by its highest percent since Maggie Thatcher's first win in 1979.<sup>1</sup> Both main parties benefited from a real squeeze on minor party votes. The overall vote for the minor parties dropped by over 13% – the largest drop since the 1930s.<sup>2</sup> The outcome was an election result that delivered a 40% vote for Labour but quite a small overall swing.

To win power, Labour needs to deliver a swing from the Tories far exceeding the 2017 result. Failure to achieve that level of direct switching will lead Keir Starmer to the same place that most Leaders of the Opposition end.

More than anything, Labour needs to understand why Labour voters have left the party for the Tories. And we cannot simply look back to the 2019 result – the trends that drove 2019 have been evident for a long time. The appointment of Deborah Mattinson to lead on Labour's electoral strategy is certainly an excellent first step, as she is someone who has spent years researching the reasons why Labour finds itself in the position it does today.

Undoubtedly, there is a huge amount of work to do here. A Labour government is only possible when we can appeal both to the voters that left us in 2019 but also to the types of voters that left us in 2005 and 2010. For too long, many voters have seen Labour as a party that does not represent them or the kind of country they want to live in, and as current polling shows, there is still a huge way to go here. We need to build a party that can retake seats like Ashfield, Bassetlaw and Grimsby while also challenging in places like Milton Keynes, Swindon and Medway.

On the organisational side, Labour will undoubtedly already be looking at how they make the persuasion and identification of Tory switchers central to plans for the next election. As was the case in the run up to 1997, the prioritisation of Tory switchers will also need to be delivered by the ground campaign. New voter ID codes, scripts, incentives and local persuasion campaigns will need to be established. We will need to talk to these voters where they are – that means communicating with Sun readers and paying less attention to the daily Twitter storm.

In no way is this a call to ignore other parts of the electorate; we live in a world where no votes can ever be taken for granted and nor should they be.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://twitter.com/PJHeneghan/status/1360573702157574146>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://twitter.com/PJHeneghan/status/1360575926002720769>.

Not unreasonably, some people both inside and outside Labour see electoral pacts and alliances as the only route to removing the Tories from power at the next election. There is clearly merit in the idea of Labour and the other smaller GB parties coming to some arrangement, negating the impact of the electoral system to defeat the Tories in scores of seats across the country. The problem is that it will never happen.

I tried myself in the run up to the 2019 election to get agreement between the Lib Dems and Labour over just 50 seats. The Liberals were open to discussions but had totally unrealistic ideas about seats where they were better placed than Labour, while Corbyn's team would not entertain the idea, simply telling me 'We don't do deals with the Lib Dems. If people are so desperate to stay in the EU rather than have a socialist government that's their choice.' There seemed little point in even suggesting to the Greens that they should only stand in two seats in England. Add to that the complexity of getting Welsh and Scottish Labour to stand aside for nationalist parties (and vice versa) and it is easy to see why it will never work.

I do not doubt the good intentions of those that continue to push the idea of a grand electoral alliance, but realistically, the only way forward is for Labour to become a party that can take enough seats directly from the Tories.

Quite simply, if we want Keir Starmer to be one of the 20% of opposition leaders that ends up as Prime Minister, then Labour needs to deliver a level of direct switching from the Tories not seen since 1997.

If we fail to grasp that, then we will lose again.

*Patrick Heneghan OBE is a former Executive Director for Elections and Campaigns for the Labour Party.*

## **Part II: What Labour can do in opposition to address voters' issues**

## Chapter 4: How not to lose culture wars

by Rob Marchant

What is a culture war? From dictionary.com: it is ‘a conflict or struggle for dominance between groups within a society or between societies, arising from their differing beliefs, practices, etc.’

Culture wars are nothing new, but they are currently higher profile than ever, arguably because of (a) the political trend towards populism at home and abroad, and (b) the magnification of disagreement and polarised viewpoints via social media, providing the tools for instant public reaction. Whatever the explanation, it is clear that culture wars form a noticeable part of the current political *Zeitgeist*.

As a political party, you may not always get to win the culture war – sometimes, you may need to do the right thing in advance of public opinion, as Labour did in the 1980s on gay rights. However, it is useful not to lose them, and Labour seems to have been doing just that on some subjects.

Two major examples are antisemitism, where the new leadership has demonstrably taken the ‘right’ side but seems sluggish in following through to the end; and the vexed issue of trans rights, where the leadership has managed to stifle almost all debate and in doing so managed, seemingly oblivious, to alienate a large swathe of its female membership.

We cover these examples in the two following chapters, as they are particularly dangerous for Labour. Not only have they surged with the proliferation of social media, but they have both used institutional capture as a way of determinedly promoting their agendas. Far-left entryists took over Labour for half of the last decade; and Stonewall's worryingly driven zealots have spread themselves over large parts of Britain's public and private sector, promoting equalities law not as it is, but as they would like it to be.

But there have been other examples over the last decade: ‘taking the knee’ may have been something that the public bought into around Euro 2020, but the linked association with the Black Lives Matter organisation ultimately turned out to be problematic. Being anti-austerity was justifiable, but the UK Cuts movement and the 2011 London demo were decidedly not; Miliband was left with egg on his face. Labour's association with such single-issue movements over the last decade has generally later turned out to look unwise.

So, here we set out a few thoughts for Labour on how not to lose the culture wars:

*1. Think carefully before wading in and do not pick the stupid side.* There are often issues around a ‘culture war’ position that need to be considered; for example, are we getting into one or more of the following?

- Moral issue – are we advocating something morally wrong, or at least questionable (and that consequently loses us disproportionate support, i.e. ‘I'm not voting Labour because of X’)?
- Practical issue – are we advocating something clearly impractical or unworkable?
- Electoral issue – are we advocating something that the public not only will not wear now but will not wear any time soon?
- Association issue – are we associating ourselves with crank individuals or organisations that have gone, or have the potential to go, rogue?

Labour's current position on transgender self-ID, for example, arguably fails on all four counts: there is a moral issue that is losing us support (in this case, among women); our position is impractical (self-ID is clearly riddled with pitfalls in its implementation, not least protections

against simple bad faith); most electors are against making it easier to change gender;<sup>3</sup> and finally, we are associating ourselves tacitly or otherwise with organisations like Stonewall, which currently look like they may well be heading for the rocks.

2. *On the other hand, do not avoid tough decisions that require challenging your own party; take them quickly.* A typical cop-out argument here is, ‘this is an issue no-one cares about’. While this may be true in some cases, that does not mean it will stay that way forever, and even if it does, there is often mileage to be had in having the fight anyway to demonstrate a return to sanity and show that the party has changed.

Tony Blair's 1995 championing of Clause Four reform – the rewriting of one of the party's key principles to remove the commitment to nationalising everything – was, on the face of it, precisely that: an abstruse issue that only party hacks cared about, and critics at the time said as much.

But would be hard to find a historian now who would argue that the move was anything other than a total success; while a few on the left of the party quit it in disgust, in the main it was revitalised, and membership kept on rising year on year well into the party's first term in government. In other words, Blair calculated, correctly, that whoever was lost on the left of the party, their loss would be more than compensated by new joiners from the political centre.

If you want a measure of how successful it was, think about this: Jeremy Corbyn – clearly no Blair fan – happily led a general election campaign with ‘for the many, not the few’ as the strapline, *having himself campaigned against that precise same wording change two decades previously.* That is a culture war won.

As for timeliness: with antisemitism, the party's slowness to deal with it has been demonstrably toxic – a poisonous drip-drip-drip in the public consciousness – and the effects are still being felt today, even after a change of leadership.

With the conflict between trans rights and women's rights, the exact same problem looms: as the issue gets daily more public attention, so the risk of the party having chosen a disastrously wrong position increases.

3. *Keep the conversation on your terrain, not theirs.* This is pretty much an iron law of politics in any event, but truer than ever here. In this sense, incumbent governments have a natural disadvantage, in that they are mostly forced to come up with concrete policy, which may be necessary but not popular; oppositions can opt to merely criticise, rather than counter-propose, if circumstances are the right ones. That means you get to focus your attack ruthlessly where their policy is weak or unworkable.

Keeping your powder dry can certainly help. With politics in general, it is much better to keep your mouth shut on an issue than try and sustain a policy position that is untenable. However, in a culture war, at some point you will still need to stand up and be counted. The trick is not to be manoeuvred into defending the indefensible.

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<sup>3</sup> "Where does the British public stand on transgender rights?", YouGov, 16 Jul 2020 [https://web.archive.org/web/20210702030840if\\_/https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2020/07/16/where-does-british-public-stand-transgender-rights](https://web.archive.org/web/20210702030840if_/https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2020/07/16/where-does-british-public-stand-transgender-rights).

4. *Plough your own furrow.* In general, avoid aligning with single-issue or single-interest groups. They may have only been a short time in existence; they may not have effective methods for screening members, who may embarrass them later; they may have nutty positions on other issues. Miliband made the mistake of aligning with the 2011 austerity protesters, only to have to hurriedly row back from that support when the demonstration turned into a riot. What he should have done was made it clear what he supported but the dividing lines that divided Labour from the melange of different anti-austerity pressure groups.

We might also add the addition of celebrity endorsers. Where they are clearly long-standing members and uncontroversial supporters, yes. Where they are recent acquisitions to the cause, or non-members who see themselves controversial and ‘edgy’, be wary. Even at the time, Ed Miliband's love-in with Russell Brand just before the 2015 election looked a little desperate and surely did not attract the voters he needed to win.

The lesson to be learned here is to never give unqualified support to people or organisations that you do not already have close and long-standing links to (e.g. an affiliate), and quite possibly not even then.

5. *Be wise to the possibility of institutional capture.* This does not always happen, but it can, and where it does, it can take years to undo. The damage of the antisemitism and other extremist views – for example, tolerance towards abhorrent regimes such as those in Syria, Cuba or Venezuela – which infused the party during the Corbyn years, whose root cause was blindness to the possibility of entryism, are still not eradicated.

The best mitigation to this risk is to never allow it to happen in the first place. As they say, the price of peace is eternal vigilance. However, where it has happened, as Labour learned in the 1980s with Militant, there needs to be a clear line drawn under it through a ruthless ‘de-Baathification strategy’<sup>4</sup> to remove the extremists. Not only is Labour visibly not at that point yet, but it has seemingly not learned its lesson yet, which presumably leaves it vulnerable to further institutional capture.

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In a piece earlier this year, columnist and former party adviser John McTernan argued<sup>5</sup> that the Tories have already lost the culture wars. While he may be right about the unexpected success of professional footballers over government politicians in raising the issue of resurgent racism, on the whole it would seem a little early to claim victory.

Listening to front bench output over the last 18 months, there have been plenty of other issues on which Labour has made poor position statements, and it now risks paying a heavy price for these in the future. And the Tories under Johnson, while often directionless, incompetent or even corrupt, still undoubtedly retain some talent in one area: the populist soundbite.

In short, we have two to three years left to the next general election. Putting on one side for a moment the strong moral arguments to change some of our current positions in any event, between now and then, Labour clearly needs to avoid creating any further hostages to fortune.

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<sup>4</sup> After the process to move out Saddam's people from the Iraqi public sector, following his removal from office.

<sup>5</sup> ‘The Tories have already lost the culture wars’, John McTernan, The New European, 23 Jul 2021 [https://web.archive.org/web/20210723065800if\\_/https://www.theneweuropean.co.uk/brexit-news/westminster-news/a-history-of-culture-wars-8153014](https://web.archive.org/web/20210723065800if_/https://www.theneweuropean.co.uk/brexit-news/westminster-news/a-history-of-culture-wars-8153014).

Indeed, we need to be identifying and fixing such ‘risky’ positions now, while there is still time.

*Rob Marchant is a Project Director in the technology sector, an activist and a former Labour Party manager who blogs at The Centre Left.*

## Chapter 5: If Jeremy Corbyn doesn't apologise over antisemitism, expel him from the party

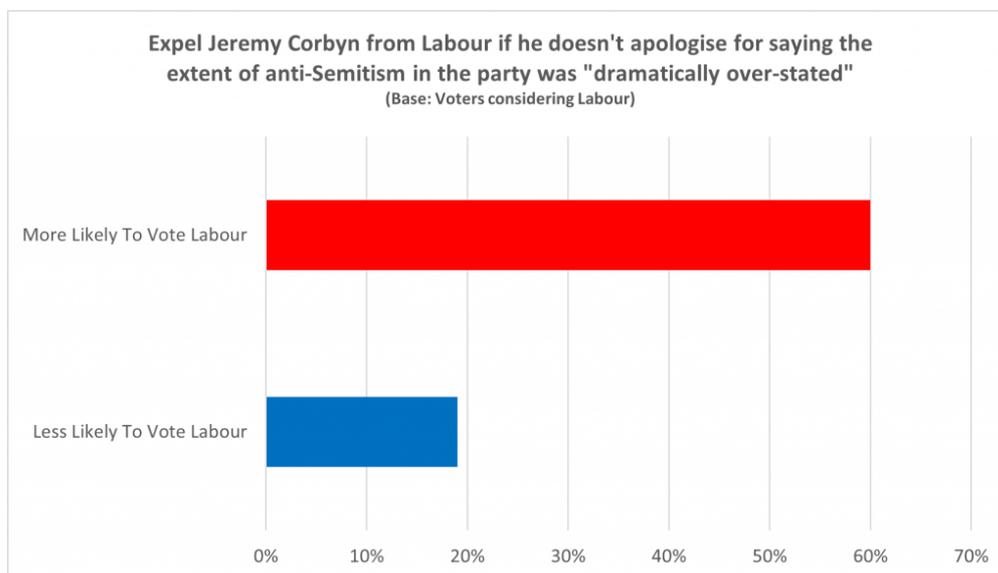
by Atul Hatwal

What to do about a problem like Jeremy Corbyn? Simple. Expel him.

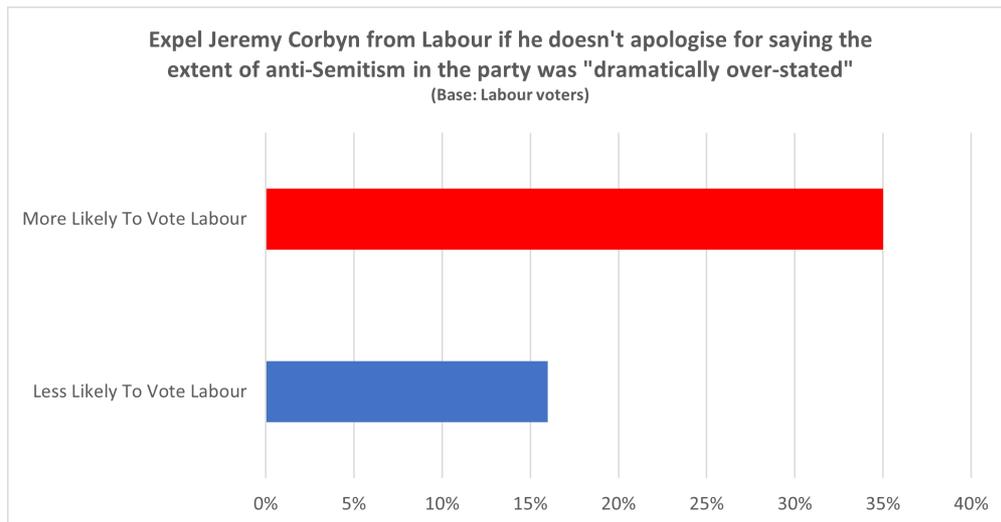
Corbyn is currently suspended from the parliamentary party for saying that the extent of antisemitism in the party was “dramatically over-stated” following the publication of the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) report on the issue. However, at the point the report was published, he had already been readmitted to Labour.

No one in the Labour party believes the current position is sustainable. How can it be that Jeremy Corbyn has crossed a red line in terms of membership of the Parliamentary Labour Party, but somehow this doesn't matter for his Labour party membership? Questions over his status will continue to suck oxygen from the issues that Labour wants to talk about, trapping the party in debate that should have ended when he left the leadership.

On behalf of *Uncut*, Yonder polled non-Labour voters considering backing the party on the question that will be raised repeatedly – should Jeremy Corbyn be expelled from the party if he doesn't apologise for what he said. The results were unequivocal – 60% said that they were more likely to vote Labour if he was expelled, 19% said they'd be less likely, a net majority of 41%.



Current Labour voters were similarly clear that Jeremy Corbyn should be expelled if he does not apologise. In response to the same statement, 35% said they would be more likely to vote Labour, 16% less likely, a net majority of 19%.



A decision at some point, is inevitable, likely in the coming months. Either Keir Starmer stands by his commendable stance on antisemitism and expels Jeremy Corbyn from the party (assuming there is no last minute apology) or he hands a victory to his opponents on the left by giving Jeremy Corbyn the parliamentary whip back, prompting a huge revolt in the PLP and pushes a significant proportion of the 1 in 4 non-Labour voters considering Labour, back towards their current parties.

*Atul Hatwal is editor of Labour Uncut*

## **Chapter 6: Want Labour to be a 'safe space for Jews'? Here are the three steps Labour must take**

**by Emma Picken and Euan Philipps**

On 29 October 2020, something took place that would have seemed inconceivable had it been 10 years earlier: the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) found that the Labour Party had breached the equalities law and had acted illegally in its treatment of Jews.<sup>6</sup>

This outcome was in part due to the vicious culture that had been imported during the Corbyn years. More importantly, however, the party was already ripe for infestation with a culture that contained both antisemitic individuals and ideas. It had little or no defence against either.

The following piece will not rehash how appalling Jeremy Corbyn's behaviour is or the depths of antisemitism found within his fellow travellers. No one has plumbed these depths more than Labour Against Antisemitism (LAAS), as our 20,000-page submission to the EHRC attests. Nor will we go over how Labour got itself into the position of being led by an antisemite; this has already been extensively and eloquently covered by David Hirsh in *Contemporary Left Antisemitism*, Dave Rich in *The Left's Jewish Problem*, Alan Johnson and many others.<sup>7</sup>

Rather, we will discuss the main areas Labour needs to address in the immediate present in order to make the party an environment where antisemitism is no longer tolerated; how Labour can sincerely atone for the damage done to the Jewish community and its vocal allies; and how Labour can turn the 'safe space for Jews' soundbite into a truly secure environment for its Jewish members.

There are three elements that must all be put in place to finally rid the Labour Party of antisemitism.

### **The first is tackling antizionist antisemitism**

Following our extensive reporting of antisemitism, our observation in LAAS is that contemporary antisemitic discourse centres around those claiming only to be 'antizionist'. However, antizionism is at the heart of the issue and, in our experience, is without fail antisemitic. Thus, without tackling antizionist antisemitism, 'tearing antisemitism out by its roots' is frankly doomed to failure. While internally within the Jewish community there will always be a small minority with antizionist views, the vast majority identify as Zionist, with

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/inquiries-and-investigations/investigation-labour-party>.

<sup>7</sup> To understand Labour antisemitism, we need the detail and the big picture – The Jewish Chronicle <https://www.thejc.com/comment/opinion/to-understand-labour-antisemitism-we-need-the-detail-and-the-big-picture-1.506449>.

Fathom – Fathom Report | Institutionally Antisemitic: Contemporary Left Antisemitism and the Crisis in the British Labour Party <https://fathomjournal.org/fathom-report-institutionally-antisemitic-contemporary-left-antisemitism-and-the-crisis-in-the-british-labour-party/>.

Jeremy Corbyn's Antisemitism Crisis: A Timeline | CAMERA <https://www.camera.org/article/jeremy-corbyns-antisemitism-crisis-a-timeline/>.

<https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.26613/jca/3.2.54/html>.

93% saying Israel plays a central part in their identity. Antizionist antisemitism harms them deeply and multiple ways.<sup>8</sup>

What must be done?

Firstly, the party must sever all ties with the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC). It is astonishing that a group so evidently steeped in antisemitism is welcome within any antiracist movement; all the more so that this group is afforded so much influence within Labour policy on Israel that two out of the three leadership candidates in the last leadership elections backed the PSC pledges.<sup>9</sup> One of the candidates, Lisa Nandy, is now Shadow Foreign Secretary.<sup>10</sup>

There is extensive evidence of the extreme antisemitism within the PSC,<sup>11</sup> which stands opposed to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism that Labour has adopted in full.

The unions, too, have not been aligned to such overt racism since the London dockers famously came out in support of Enoch Powell. The affiliation to the PSC of every single large union within Labour must be ended without delay. It is deeply ironic that Frances O'Grady feels bound to discuss ways in which the unions need to face up to their racist past, while ignoring the flourishing racism of today.<sup>12</sup>

Secondly, Labour must firmly close its doors to the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, whose banner of 'social justice' serves to disguise a darker aim: the eradication of Israel. BDS initiatives remove agency from Jewish businesses, students and academics in the diaspora. These have no impact on Israeli governmental policies; however, they are a conduit for some of the most vicious antisemitic intimidation seen since the 1930s.

No right-minded Labour member would admit to supporting BDS if the above points were included in its discussion on racism, and especially not if the movement ever reached its goal – so why is this tolerated? Why is this antizionist antisemitism treated differently from other kinds of racism? In our view, the party should not treat adherents to BDS any differently to any other racist.

What many miss is the fact that BDS is both bigoted and discriminatory. It holds Israel to standards not required by any other democratically elected sovereign state. Its clarion call of 'to the river and the sea' is the call for the destruction of Israel, as it claims the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea; the state of Israel. In fact, the logo on posters and T-shirts for the BDS and its sister organisation, the Palestine Solidarity Committee, clearly

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<sup>8</sup> The Attitudes of British Jews Towards Israel <https://archive.jpr.org.uk/object-uk337>

Israel and The Middle East – Board of Deputies <https://www.bod.org.uk/issue-areas/israel-the-middle-east/>.

<sup>9</sup> Labour's policy on Israel and the Palestinians should not be dictated by PSC | Luke Akehurst | The Blogs <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/labours-policy-on-israel-palestine-should-not-be-dictated-by-psc/>.

<sup>10</sup> Lisa Nandy backs Palestine Solidarity Campaign's pledges, including right of return – The Jewish Chronicle <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk/lisa-nandy-backs-palestine-solidarity-campaign-s-pledges-including-right-of-return-1.496849>.

<sup>11</sup> The Palestine Solidarity Campaign of Jew hatred | Marc Goldberg | The Blogs

<https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/the-palestine-solidarity-campaign-of-jew-hatred/>.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/swathe-of-antisemitic-abuse-is-uncovered-at-group-backed-by-jeremy-corbyn-a4136681.html?amp>.

<sup>12</sup> PressReader.com | Trade Talks: Interview With TUC Boss <https://www.pressreader.com/uk/eastern-eye-uk/20210709/281487869344323>.

shows the entirety of Israel as being claimed for a Palestinian state – no two-state solution or shared ownership, just the eradication of Israel. The Labour Party must find a better way to legitimately support the cause of the Palestinian people without calling for the destruction of Israel and the alienation of the majority of Anglo Jewry.

### **The second element that the Labour Party needs to deal with is the appearance of its MPs and their tacit endorsement of antisemitism at Israel/Palestine demonstrations**

There is no escaping the blatant antisemitism on show at these rallies, nor the hatred they inspire. A multitude of examples illustrate why no antiracist should go anywhere near them. However, instead of distancing themselves, Labour MPs have either kept silent or made meek excuses over the antisemitism on show. Furthermore, during the most recent conflict in Israel/Palestine, MP after MP stood up alongside Hamas and Iran to castigate our military ally and the one Jewish state. If Labour were in power, would this become our foreign policy?

Disciplinary processes attached to what amounts to the official legitimisation of such extremist hatred should be implemented: enabling or indicating support for Hamas – whose military wing is still designated as a terrorist organisation – while sharing platforms with racist fanatics should have consequences for those representing the Labour Party.

The impact of these MPs' actions during periods of conflict and the consequences for British Jews cannot be underestimated. As covered by the Community Security Trust (CST)'s recent publication, 'The Month of Hate', the real-world abuse of Jews between 8 May and 7 June 2021 was unprecedented in recent years. Meanwhile, instead of defending Jewish people against this abuse, the Labour Party could only be found, it seems, consorting with the abusers, sharing platforms with those who feel that the destruction of Israel is justified, and protesting with those too ignorant to understand what the slogan 'from the river to the sea' really means.

There will, naturally, be many Labour MPs who do not agree with attending these rallies, but at the time of writing, they are nowhere to be seen or heard. Their silence is as loud to the Jewish community as the rants of the extremists screaming from the podiums. And meanwhile, tragically, Jewish children and young people are suffering abuse at school and universities.

The sum total of the above is that Labour is not a safe space for Jews. The antisemitism scandal may have exploded under Corbyn, but it was there before he took control, and the potential for Labour to be led by another antisemite will remain until antizionist antisemitism is properly dealt with. It is not enough to only pick off the low-hanging fruit – without addressing these areas, there will always be a continuous stream of antisemitic thinking feeding into the party.

If Labour acts on these points, this will also deter antisemites from wanting to join or stay in the party. It will create an environment where civil discourse over Israel can take place without falling prey to extremist doctrine, and where those with constructive ideas can be heard over the current toxic noise.

### **The third element is process**

Reporting members who hold (or at least can be shown to promote) antisemitic views and behaviours to the Labour Party is both arduous and thankless: the work is time-consuming and repetitive, sifting through racist content is mentally and emotionally challenging, and the confidentiality of the disciplinary process means that it is unrewarding. However, the simple truth is that in an institutionally antisemitic organisation like the Labour Party, there are a lot of members who are antisemitic, and so how these members are dealt with is obviously an

important element of how Labour moves on from its antisemitism crisis (if, indeed, it is able to).

Labour Against Antisemitism has always argued for a zero-tolerance approach to tackling antisemitism in the Labour Party<sup>13</sup>. We stated early on our belief that being seen to be antisemitic would not only be fundamentally wrong in terms of what it meant for Jewish party members and the wider British Jewish community, but also that the broader political, moral and institutional failure would be cataclysmic for the Labour Party's reputation as a potential party of government. So it proved to be, as the Labour Party fell to its worst general election defeat in 80 years in December 2019, followed by the ignominy of the EHRC judgement in October 2020. If the Labour Party wants to demonstrate that it is a safe place for Jewish members to return to and that it is an organisation competent and capable enough to address its own internal crises, then a zero-tolerance approach to antisemitism must be established to prove it understands why and how things went wrong, that the same circumstances will not be repeated and that those responsible (from those in senior positions of responsibility, including the PLP, to the most casual party member) will be removed.

In terms of what 'zero-tolerance' would mean in practice, we believe there needs to be a fair but low burden of evidence to prove an antisemitic mindset (contextualised against the IHRA definition of antisemitism) and that the level of punishment would tend towards the most severe. This is not to suggest that there would be a totally draconian approach – there needs to be leeway for genuine mistakes and education – but where there is a clear pattern of evidence of antisemitic views then that person should not be a Labour Party member, as they are a potential danger to Jewish party members and their presence in a mainstream political party is a threat both to the integrity of the Labour Party's internal democratic processes and to the safety of our national democracy.

Under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, and specifically during the period that Jenny Formby was General Secretary, reported expulsion rates were pitifully low – somewhere around 2%.<sup>14</sup> Following the EHRC Report, which stated that the Labour Party 'must live up to this commitment [of zero-tolerance]'<sup>15</sup> and 'must make it clear that antisemitic conduct by members will not be tolerated',<sup>16</sup> there were obvious expectations that there would be a significant increase in the numbers of expulsions. Unfortunately, although expulsions have increased markedly, they are still too low, and possibly as few as 24%<sup>17</sup> of cases (or one in four) are serious enough to get to NCC and NEC level. This is undoubtedly better, but still nowhere near the expulsion rate of 80 or 90% that would be closer to most people's expectations of a zero-tolerance policy. The reason for this reluctance to expel may have something to do with the spate of recent court cases brought by expelled and suspended members against the Labour Party;<sup>18</sup> even though the plaintiffs lost on the most recent occasion, a financially weakened Labour Party is understandably reluctant to pursue further cases against

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<sup>13</sup> <https://twitter.com/LabourAgainstAS/status/941212618580221955?s=20>.

<sup>14</sup> <https://labourlist.org/2019/02/jennie-formby-provides-numbers-on-labour-antisemitism-cases/>.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/investigation-into-antisemitism-in-the-labour-party.pdf> p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/investigation-into-antisemitism-in-the-labour-party.pdf> p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> <https://labouragainstas.org.uk/news-and-comment/labours-disciplinary-stats/>.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.cityam.com/expelled-labour-members-lose-high-court-antisemitism-battle/>.

opponents who seem to be backed by seemingly limitless crowdfunding campaigns and even, it is alleged, one major trade union.

Either way, the Labour Party must find another way to increase its expulsion rate to demonstrate that it is serious about zero tolerance. One way has been to proscribe groups<sup>19</sup> such as Labour Against the Witch-hunt and the Labour in Exile Network, whose raison d'être had been to oppose efforts to tackle antisemitism and to support expelled and suspended members. Other groups that could be targeted include the Labour Representation Committee (of which former Shadow Chancellor, John McDonnell, is Life President) and People's Momentum, the pro-Jeremy Corbyn group set up by Jon Lansman in 2015. Proscribing both these groups would provoke a huge backlash but is arguably a necessity for Labour's electability even without the positive impact it would have on removing antisemitic party members. Another option would be to toughen the party's rulebook on antisemitism and so reduce the possibility of losing court cases to disaffected expelled members that way.

These changes would require an appetite for the Labour Party to actually exceed the recommendations of the EHRC report. While fulfilling the demands of the EHRC should go a long way to addressing Labour's antisemitism crisis (and there are still many gaps in the Labour Party's Action Plan that still need to be delivered), we feel more action is required – the EHRC's investigation was, after all, restricted by its own parameters and so the findings and response are similarly limited. The Labour Party is also an institution, and like most institutions, is also subject to internal resistance to change. What those currently in charge of the party must avoid is a route to reform that satisfies only the most basic requirements of the EHRC in the short term, as any resultant changes risk being superficial and temporary, and therefore inauthentic to an electorate who are sick of being taken for fools by the Labour Party. Simply saying 'that will do' on Labour Party antisemitism is a recipe for disaster; what Starmer and his supporters must ask instead is 'what will work?'

Identifying whether what the Labour Party is doing to tackle antisemitism is actually working is the final part of the process of reform and has the potential to provide benefits in terms of understanding how to tackle both anti-Jewish racism and other forms of racism in other settings. External polling should be carried out on party members' views over time to gauge whether levels of antisemitism are coming down and therefore indicating whether the Labour Party's broader strategy is working. Antisemitism training and education initiatives need to be monitored and evaluated to ensure their efficacy and value for money so they do not become box-ticking exercises and are genuinely transformative experiences for those members sent on them, playing a significant role in tackling antisemitism and challenging antisemitic attitudes. The findings will naturally have an ongoing function in shaping how the Labour Party balances its future antisemitism strategy.

## **Labour's denial and victimhood**

As obvious as this may seem, it apparently needs to be stated: antisemitism did not happen to the Labour Party, it happened to the Jewish community. Antisemitic abuse is still happening to the Jewish community, and this has become mainstream because of the Labour Party. Yet

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<sup>19</sup> <https://labourlist.org/2021/07/labours-ruling-body-agrees-to-proscribe-socialist-appeal-and-three-other-groups/>.

Labour appears to be in denial about who the victims of the antisemitism crisis actually are and views itself as the victim.

Now that Corbyn has lost control, much of the party behaves as if the explosion of antisemitism was somehow nothing to do with them; that the thousands of Labour members radicalised under Corbyn are not still a huge or devastating problem for UK Jews (the number of people probably goes into millions if you include voters); and that while many people fought to 'save Labour' and rescue the country from Brexit, the by-product was a huge increase in racist bullying and hatred towards its tiny Jewish community. The mainstreaming of antisemitism has neither been acknowledged nor redress offered by the current party leadership.

Many Labour MPs spoke of their 'devastation and shame' following the EHRC verdict and about how they could not believe this had happened in the Labour Party. Yet the very act of making this statement seems to be one of removing their own agency from what happened rather than an opportunity to acknowledge and make amends for the role they played. Yes, there are the obvious villains and heroes, but staying silent is an active choice. Too many kept quiet or made excuses, while telling the electorate twice that Jeremy Corbyn should be Prime Minister.

There seems to be a temptation now among MPs and party members to disassociate from any responsibility to undo the damage the Corbyn years created and instead to congratulate themselves on his removal as leader.

Adding insult to injury, too often those who walked away or took an uncompromising stance against Corbyn are swept aside as though it is they who are defective. Those still pushing to suggest Labour has a deep-rooted problem with antisemitism are seen as a nuisance now that Labour is 'under new management', even though no organisation can possibly get a clean bill of health so soon after being found institutionally racist. The fact that party culture has not undergone fundamental review in order to ensure that an antisemite will never lead the party again is a monumental mistake.

### **The damage will take years to undo**

The Jewish community is not buying any of it, and why should they? They know it is not true that Labour is a safe space when 82 CLPs passed motions against the suspension of Jeremy Corbyn from the party.

Excluding those who took an uncompromising position from the party is damaging and immoral. Many who walked away risked everything when they did so: having their careers cut short, being pilloried by those supporting Corbyn and too often being seen as inferior by many of those who stayed and fought. The impact on them and on those who were forced out<sup>20</sup> has not been addressed by the current leadership.

These people are considered heroes amongst the Jewish community, and many will not trust the party until they are both welcomed back in and feel the party has sufficiently changed to want to join.

Considering the complete breakdown of trust between the Jewish community and the Labour Party, the treatment of those who walked away or staunchly opposed Corbyn as somehow 'not

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<sup>20</sup> Forced Out: The Labour Antisemitism Resignation Letters - Goldsmiths Research Online  
<http://research.gold.ac.uk/id/eprint/27993/>.

Labour' is very revealing. When only 6% of a minority community is prepared to vote for the party that supposedly fights racism,<sup>21</sup> taking a view of those who could not stomach the pretence as surplus to finding the solution is absurd and destructive. These people are the only ones truly standing up for the Jewish community and should be integral to repairing Labour's tattered reputation over antisemitism.

Labour's tribalism must be set aside when dealing with antisemitism – just as the Party's moral compass was when it allowed a racist to lead it for five years.

Corbyn was a part of Labour tradition, and that is what needs to change before the party slides back into complacency, believing it is 'job done'. As the hard left are driven back into submission, every other part of Labour needs to ask itself: 'What role do I play in fixing this institutionally antisemitic party, and how do I make sure it never happens again?' The party needs to stop feeling sorry for itself and start listening to those still talking about antisemitism.

Given how difficult the Labour Party has found coming to terms with the scale of its antisemitism crisis, we do not expect all of these recommendations to be accepted immediately or to be welcomed particularly warmly. To be frank, though, the Labour Party long ago lost the right to be sensitive about the levels of racism within its membership and needs to face up to the reality that heavy surgery is necessary to its future survival. If Starmer and the moderates wish to retain control of the Labour Party after the next general election then they need to win seats, and to do that they must persuade the electorate that Labour has changed. If those changes are simply cosmetic then voters will smell a rat: there is nothing to be lost by the leader going all out on the fight against antisemitism.

Thanks to Labour, there are now a far larger number of antisemites in the UK than there were six years ago. Only when the party understands its obligations in undoing this can it begin to make amends and rebuild trust from the Jewish community.

*Emma Picken is a director of Labour Against Antisemitism (LAAS) providing research to numerous journalists to expose antisemitism.*

*Euan Philipps has acted as spokesperson and communications lead for LAAS since the group started in 2017. Formerly a CLP chair, he is no longer engaged in local party activism and is dedicated to challenging antisemitism in the Labour Party and the wider British political Left.*

*Both Emma and Euan are spokespeople for LAAS, and the writing of this piece is a group collaboration to reflect the views of very many within the Jewish community. The editor is Mina Kupfermann, with special input from Fiona Sharpe and Alex Hearn and credit to the whole LAAS team.*

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<sup>21</sup> Exclusive – Election Poll: One quarter of UK Jews set to vote Lib Dem | Jewish News  
<https://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/election-poll-2019-survation-jn/>.

## **Chapter 7: Labour is losing women. It could cost the party dearly. It does not have to be this way**

by Nicole Lampert

Labour is losing women. It is losing its female activists, its putative politicians and its core voters. And the trans debate could even see it lose the country at large – again.

There is a female MP, Rosie Duffield, who is too frightened to appear at Labour conferences because so many trans rights activists – whipped up into a fury by people within the party – have threatened violence against her.

A long-awaited statement yesterday by Keir Starmer was the usual fence sitting – asserting that the Party supports the Equality Act, which legislates for single-sex spaces but adding that trans people should mainly be allowed in them – while also reasserting plans for self-identification. The leadership must have hoped that this would dampen down the row but, in fact, it served to only add fuel to the fire. Did they learn nothing from the Brexit fudge, which managed to infuriate both sides and lost them votes from Brexiters and Remainers?

Women’s rights are being removed all over the world; in the last few weeks, we have seen it from America to Afghanistan. And that is why women will not take this lying down, even from a party that they have always supported.

Sara, whose parents and grandparents were Labour councillors, and who has campaigned on doorsteps for the party since she was a child, called it ‘The toxic nail in the coffin of my support for Labour. I cannot support Labour because of this.’

Joan, who with her partner made up the only gay couple in her CLP, said, ‘When I asked for help from our Labour candidate in keeping hospital wards single sex, I was told that I was, “irrationally prejudiced against trans people.” I’d rather spoil my ballot than vote for Labour.’

Nicola, a Labour veteran, was almost in tears when she told me that ‘The Tories are not competent. They are pushing more people into poverty. But I can’t vote for a party that prioritises the interests – political, economic, social – of males over the reality of women’s experiences.’

While Sally, a trans woman, said the debate feels equally poisonous for the trans community. ‘Self-ID is a long-term negative for trans people because the barrier to a protected characteristic is too low and Labour needs to recognise that,’ she said. ‘Look at things like Wi Spa in America [when a self-identifying trans woman with a history of sex offences exposed their penis in a room full of naked women and girls]. People are beginning to think we’re all perverts and someone needs to talk about this sensibly.’

I have not used any of their real names because this is the most toxic row that Labour is involved in today. Women do not feel just ignored but demonised. They are being pushed out of the party and, in the wider world, losing their jobs. A writer friend lost work solely because she followed a gender critical feminist on Twitter. Aside from a brave few, Labour MPs are terrified about speaking up because they know trans rights activists will then demand they are sacked, and the leadership will do nothing to stop the bullying. Even the trans people who speak up against the activism orthodoxy are labelled transphobes.

This row, fuelled by extremism, is hurting women and is also incredibly painful for the trans community. To write this chapter I talked to many of them; they have never felt so demonised or alone even though the rights of trans people has never been on the political agenda more. As a Jewish woman, I have some understanding of what it is like to find everyone has an opinion

of who you are, what you should be offended by, and to be at the centre of hatred and shouting whilst no-one actually stops to ask what you think.

Some people I spoke to within the party said that Labour should just try and not talk about the issue – it is, of course, one that the party has no influence over until it actually gets into power and is being stoked up by gleeful Tories pushing the culture war to make the party seem out of touch. But it is too late for that.

It is appearing as a concern on the doorsteps now; another example – like the Palestinian flag-waving – of how ‘woke’ Labour has narrow concerns that are a world away from making the lives of ordinary British people better. After the Corbyn years, Labour, more than anything else, needs to show that it is much more than a flag-waving student organisation that does not actually listen to the people it purports to represent.

Labour needs to help trans people. There are lots of ways they can do this; they could start now with the suggestion of a cross party group looking at how trans needs can be met in workplaces and schools, creating a best-practice standard for recruitment and mentoring.

Other ways include reducing waiting times for operations; fast tracking adults with gender dysphoria; pushing for more specialised mental health help around trans issues so that once someone has been diagnosed and counselled, there is a clinical pathway to hormones and surgery if this is something they choose; and reforming the GRA process so that it is less faceless and invasive. In addition, the party should highlight trans success stories, and need to distinguish trans from non-binary, as this causes confusion. They should choose more trans spokespeople and politicians, but at the same time ensure their gender is not made into a big issue. Labour should be celebrating trans people, not constantly and condescendingly telling them how hard life is for them.

Trans rights can be improved in a number of ways without infringing on women’s rights, and the first thing that needs to be discussed is how this can happen in a realistic manner. The party has to stop seeing this as – ironically enough – a binary issue, where someone is either pro trans rights or a bigot. Most women and men who stand in opposition to the radical trans activists do want the lives of trans people to be better; they just do not want it to impact on the lives and the safety of women.

The party needs to start by ending the pretence that something like self-ID – as pledged by Keir Starmer for the party’s next manifesto – does not come without potential dangers to women if there are not safeguards in place. That is just Kafkaesque gaslighting from an organisation that might flaunt its equality agenda but which is yet to even have a female leader.

People who point out their fears – good left-wing women who have often dedicated years to the Labour party – should not be labelled bigots, Nazis, haters or witches for talking about the dangers that come with opening up safe spaces. No female MP should be afraid to express her beliefs. How can the party claim to be talking up for the oppressed when it fails to listen to women?

Outside of the party, this bullying behaviour, this silencing, means that women can no longer even talk about the words mother or woman – even these are being stolen from us. In medical literature, we have become menstruators, ovulators, people with a cervix. We are told not to complain as this is inclusive language, but that is a lie; inclusive language would not exclude women or reduce us to body parts. Truly inclusive language would be ‘women and menstruators’. It is worth noting that men are never referred to in this dehumanising language, and this is an example of the every-day sexism women still have to deal with.

How did we get to the point where the view of so many women, men – and even of trans people – are being ignored and demonised? Where telling people to shut up or burning books is deemed progressive?

Some activists see this as the big fight for equality of their generation and spout slogans as if they were a cult. They appear to believe that if they can just shut the witchy women up then everything will be peace and love, unicorns and rainbows. They are children.

Every trans person I spoke to pointed out the obvious unfairness of including trans women in female sports and how demanding that it happens – even when it is potentially dangerous – only leads to more animosity and anger towards the trans community. Trans people should be able to play sport but not at the expense of women. This is obvious to everyone – particularly voters who do not think about this issue that much – but seemingly not to trans activists.

Several of the trans people I spoke to also insisted that trans women should not be taking up women's officer roles in CLPs when they are there for a reason; because Labour is traditionally misogynistic.

Meanwhile, the women I spoke to said again and again that Labour should listen to them. Women have been talking about their oppression for a long time and yet these fears and worries are still ignored. While none of us really imagine that misogyny can completely disappear, we do expect the leaders of a mainstream party to listen and put a halt to the bullying of women who say they are scared.

We are just a few years on from the #MeToo movement when many men were surprised when they heard about the extent of sexism and abuse in the workplace for the first time. They said they had heard, they had listened and they would do better. Earlier this year, after the murder of Sarah Everard, there was the outpouring about the rapes women endured and the fears they had about even walking down a street – once again, men said they had heard, they had listened, they would do better. And that was followed by the Everyone's Invited scandal detailing abuse against girls in and out of schools by boys pumped up on porn; once again men said they had heard, they had listened and they would do better.

But when women talk about the safeguards they would like because of their fears, they are shut down and call transphobes. The wider electorate – 51% of whom are women – see how unedifying this is when it comes under a Labour banner.

Women know men more than men do. We know how many predatory men there are out there; most of us spent our younger years avoiding touching, pushing, grabbing and groping male hands.

It is not most trans women we are afraid of but male predators disguising themselves as trans women to get easy access to vulnerable women. The easier it is for people to identify as women, the more predators will take the opportunity because that is how criminals work. This is an incredibly important distinction and one that gets completely lost in the row because many men cannot understand why a man would go to the effort of saying they were a woman just to get access to women. But women can.

The case of Karen White is one such example. White had not undergone any surgery and was legally a male but self-identified as a woman. In 2018, while on remand for grievous bodily harm, multiple rapes and sexual offences, White was placed in a female prison and sexually assaulted two inmates over a three-month period.

In July, a case at the High Court, brought by a woman prisoner who said she had been sexually assaulted by a trans prisoner, concluded for the first time in black and white, that some transgender prisoners did present a risk to women. It emerged that of 163 transgender prisoners

in 2019, half of them – 81 – were sex offenders. Yet trans activists dare to call women bigots for saying that men will identify as female for nefarious reasons. This is why Labour has to stop pretending there is not potential danger here and promise safeguards.

The case's judge, Lord Justice Holroyde, said, 'The unconditional introduction of a transgender woman into the general population of a women's prison carries a statistically greater risk of sexual assault upon non-transgender prisoners than would be the case if a non-transgender woman were introduced.'

He also acknowledged that many vulnerable women may be scared of a trans woman prisoner, even if they presented no risk; and that did not make them transphobic. 'I readily accept that some and perhaps many women prisoners may suffer fear and acute anxiety if required to share prison accommodation and facilities with a transgender woman who has male genitalia and that their fear and anxiety may be increased if that transgender woman has been convicted of sexual or violent offences against women.'

The same goes for single-sex wards in hospitals and refuges, which are now having funding taken away because they are refusing trans women. If you have been violently attacked or sexually assaulted by a man, you may still be frightened of someone with a male body, no matter how much people tell you that you just need to get over it. That situation is not fair for either the women or the trans women who are placed in difficult situations.

Women and trans people (trans men as well as women) need refuges, but refuges also need to have safe spaces for just women, inner sanctums, perhaps. The most vulnerable women are statistically likely to be working class and already victims of sexual and other violence. Surely, Labour should, both morally and because it represents the party's electorate, automatically be speaking up for them. Why is the party ignoring them?

Women are potentially being doubly abused here, and that is not the only way. If a woman comes from a strict religious (and therefore patriarchal) background, she will have been brought up believing she must not touch a man who is not a relation and needs to look modest at all times in front of male strangers otherwise she brings shame on herself and her family. For women like this, their only recourse may be to totally withdraw from any public spaces. What if she needs to go to hospital and wards are not single sex? How do you weigh up her needs with those of a trans woman who may present as a man, however they identify?

Similarly, the party needs to explore the thinking that is leading record numbers of girls into thinking life would be better off if they were boys because it is nuanced and complicated. In 1989, the newly opened Tavistock clinic in London had just two referrals – both boys. Today, there were more than 2,000 children wanting to change gender, and almost two thirds of them were teenage girls. In our highly sexualised and confusing internet world, it is more important than ever that young people have accurate diagnosis before undergoing hormone therapy.

This is a serious issue made up of complex strands that needs to go beyond sloganizing and hatred. It is a debate going on around the world, one that is only getting angrier, and that is why Labour could and should be taking leadership on it, taking on board both the wants and needs of the trans community and those of women. There are ways of doing this.

It is time to listen to the sensible voices on all sides and come up with a humane solution that works; one that both recognises trans people and their challenges and also that women need to feel safe and secure. It is time to stop being dominated by extremists and show that Labour is a party that is actually capable of leading on even the most difficult of issues.

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## **Chapter 8: We've got the union link. Let's add a business link show voters that Labour is serious about working with business**

**by Jonathan Todd**

Backing business should be a sine qua non of politics. Yet we now have a 'fuck business' prime minister,<sup>22</sup> who won an 80-seat majority against a Labour Party that the CBI characterised as, 'proposing the biggest programme of renationalisation this country has ever seen at great cost with uncertain returns to the taxpayer'. As a consequence, Labour was then seen as being 'at least as damaging' as No Deal Brexit.<sup>23</sup>

Two political consequences follow:

1. Such a prime minister offers Labour a chance to develop closer relations with business than the Conservatives.
2. Labour's 2019 manifesto is not the package with which to seize this opportunity.

'I'm acutely aware that among my first tasks is rebuilding the relationship between the Labour party and business,' Keir Starmer recently said, much to his credit.<sup>24</sup>

Around the same time as Starmer was saying this, the chief executive of the North East England Chamber of Commerce was writing to the prime minister asking him to give his 'most urgent and personal attention' to the 'damage being done to our economy' by the prime minister's Brexit. Two weeks after receiving this letter, the prime minister had still not replied.<sup>25</sup>

Doing counterintuitive things often helps parties in opposition. A pro-business Labour confounds entrenched views of the party and confirms that we are under new management.

What Boris Johnson is getting wrong enlarges this opportunity for Labour. Equally, he is getting something right: optimism.

'Remember that Barack Obama's breakthrough owed a lot to the slogan, "yes we can." The left needs to show that it can somehow improve things,' writes Chris Dillow. 'This requires not just policies, but the self-confidence to sell them. Johnson shows that politicians can succeed by not being scared of their own shadow. The left should learn from this.'<sup>26</sup>

Labour needs to articulate an optimism about the UK and a sense of purpose about what we can become.

Much of what the UK might achieve is bound up with business: how the extraordinary achievement of the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine might be built upon; how the City of London might power a green industrial revolution; how our farm and food standards might save our countryside and reduce our waistlines; how investment in gigafactories might again make us the best place in the world to make cars; how we might put solar panels on every new home

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<sup>22</sup> This is something the prime minister was reported as saying about business concerns around Brexit when he was foreign secretary in June 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Carolyn Fairbairn speech at CBI Annual Conference, 18 November 2019.

<sup>24</sup> Financial Times, 5 August 2021.

<sup>25</sup> The Guardian, 9 August 2021.

<sup>26</sup> Stumbling and Mumbling blog, 14 June 2021.

and in outer space<sup>27</sup> to create abundant energy and pump-prime British industry; and how we might create careers of meaning, dignity and decent pay for everyone.

There is so much that the UK might achieve, but none of it is possible without business to develop new products and services; create jobs and pay wages; and pay taxes that finance public services.

We should see business as partners on the journey that Labour seeks for Britain, and all successful partnerships are conversations.

In contrast, it has not only been on Brexit that business concerns have found deaf ears in government. In March 2021, for example, it was confirmed that the Industrial Strategy was being discontinued as a policy by the UK government, along with the council of business leaders that had overseen it. As part of the Budget, a document entitled *Build Back Better* was published by HM Treasury outlining the government's investment plans for economic growth, but this is not a strategy in the same way and provides little detail on innovation challenges or prioritising high-growth sectors.

To scrap the Industrial Strategy is to move the goalposts for business; to replace the Industrial Strategy with such a half-baked publication is to use jumpers for goalposts, neither of which provides much encouragement for business to shoot for goal.

The uncertainty that hangs over the future of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) is another insult to the time and expertise that businesspeople have voluntarily invested in these structures.

Even though the UK currently suffers from a debilitating shortage of 100,000 HGV drivers, industry has also received a deaf ear from government on this pressing problem. 'Our members tell us the only thing that is going to solve this in the short term is flexibility on the immigration system,' recently said James Firth, head of road freight regulatory policy at Logistics UK, which represents freight owners including supermarkets.<sup>28</sup> But, despite business facing massive complications, the government prefers Brexit dogma to taking this step.

This refusal to support business contrasts with the productive interactions enjoyed by business with the last Labour government. From the Prawn Cocktail Offensive, which sought to rebuild business trust in Labour over lunches with Shadow Chancellor John Smith, to the council of senior business figures that Gordon Brown formed to advise him as prime minister, this period in government was marked by respectful relations with business.

Since then, Labour has changed, as has business. Over the decade between Gordon Brown's council of business leaders following him out of Downing Street and Jeremy Corbyn's highhanded approach to business leading to the nadir of the CBI's damning verdict on the 2019 manifesto, business has sought to rebuild its reputation after the financial crisis of 2007/8.

The most prominent campaigns on the CBI website, for example, do not push for taxes to be cut or regulations to be junked. These campaigns transmit much more civic purpose than that.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See Will Hutton, 'Fifty years after Apollo, space is about to transform our life on Earth beyond recognition', *The Observer*, 2 May 2021.

<sup>28</sup> *The Guardian*, 20 July 2021.

<sup>29</sup> When the website was accessed on 10 July 2021.

*Transform the journey – better commutes for all; Race to zero – driving the UK’s sustainable future; Connect business and education to help every student succeed.*

There is much to chew on here at a contemporary Prawn Cocktail Offensive. Call it a Canape Offensive. Ensure the slow food philosophy informs the canapes to emphasise Labour’s renewed focus on farming and food standards. Let the food do some of the talking.

But most of the talking should come from businesspeople and be heard by receptive Labour listeners. Formalising this process would communicate the seriousness with which Labour takes it and help the engagement be more substantive and meaningful.

Of course, Labour already has structures for dialogue with business such as the affiliate society Labour Business. The Business Forum on the Monday of conference is Labour’s flagship business event of the year and aims to understand the views of businesses from across the country. It consists of speeches, roundtables, panel discussions and Q&As with Keir Starmer, Rachel Reeves and other members of the Shadow Cabinet.

These initiatives should be made more:

- **Prominent:** Not enough people know the Business Forum exists.
- **Ongoing:** Instead of being just a moment in time, there should be a continuous conversation to provide Labour with live business intelligence that can be used to attack the government and refine our policy propositions.
- **Structured:** There should be a business forum, chaired and appointed by the shadow chancellor, for dialogue, engagement and policy development. The business representation on this forum should be representative of different business sectors, parts of the country and sizes of business.
- **Fun:** With some imagination, something more enjoyable than speeches and roundtables might be found.

This requires:

- **Planning:** A programme of activities should be made for the forum over 2022 with the aim of significantly improving Labour’s relations with business in advance of a potential general election in the spring of 2023.
- **Coordination:** This should be within existing networks and between the policies and campaigning of the party and the input of this new forum.
- **Political leadership and focus:** There should be a willingness to commit to the programme of activities and to having the party’s thinking shaped by this new forum.
- **Business commitment:** To a charter of social responsibility, including paying the living wage, as a condition of membership of this forum.

At the heart of a new approach from Labour to engaging business should be a new commitment to formalise the relationship with business by expanding the membership and remit of Labour Business from just another affiliate to one which has

- Representation on the National Executive Committee
- A formal role in Labour’s policy making process as a consultee

Labour is at its best when rooted in the experiences of the British people. We have a union link that provides some of that connection but just 13% of private sector employees are members

of a union. Labour has an opportunity to fill this gap by taking direct action to engage British business and extend its role within Labour via a new business link.

Yonder polled voters for Uncut on their views if Labour were to make such a change and the results were striking: 74% of non-Labour voters considering backing Labour at the next election said it would make them more likely to vote Labour. Just 9% disagreed, a net majority of +65%. Out of this group, 15% said it would make the ‘much more likely’ to vote Labour.

We need to run the party as we intend to run the country: with business at its heart. We need pride in the strengths of our country and optimism about what these strengths can achieve in partnership with a thriving private sector. We need to form that partnership now and have it drive our approach to winning and retaining power.

Where we are in power, such as in London and Manchester, we need to demonstrate the tangible difference that improved relations with business can make to the quality of Labour administration.

It takes a dream to build a successful business. Not of wealth beyond avarice but of making a difference. Labour, too, are dreamers – of a better tomorrow. Together, a hopeful Labour and a flourishing private sector can transform our country.

This requires much more than the threat to business that Labour had come to be by 2019. It demands more than lip service to the importance of the private sector or the cold shoulder that the government have given business for too long.

It needs a fundamental reboot in Labour’s relations with business.

There is time – just – for this to be delivered before the next general election. Labour should pursue this end with the singlemindedness, confidence, and focus of start-up entering a new market.

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## **Chapter 9: Labour must bin its ‘Point of order, chair’ culture and focus fully on campaigning**

**by Anthony Lavelle**

Just 11 years ago, we had a Labour Prime Minister in Downing Street, but even for a 26-year-old like me it feels much longer. In that time, we have lost four general elections in a row – the last, in 2019, disastrously so, securing the lowest number of Labour MPs since 1935. In the 12 years I have been a party member, only one of them has seen us in government. The rest have involved crushing defeats.

I remember attending a conference back in 2011. It was my first, and also the first time it was held in my home city of Liverpool. I was the youth delegate for my CLP and was the last delegate to be called to speak in a debate about ‘Refounding Labour’. I talked about why we must look to our traditions as a community-based movement where the voices of individual members were always valued. But we must also widen our horizons and never become inward-looking.

It was vital, I argued, that the public had a say in the future of our party and that we always reflected their priorities, channelled their hopes and desires and provided an open and optimistic vision for the future of our country; one that was inspiring but also rooted in relatable politics. If we do not listen, what chance do we have of being listened to?

Anyway, the rest is history, and here we are, a decade on and no nearer to power than we were back then. Despite a proud record of achievement during its thirteen years, the New Labour government lost its way and ended up with hundreds fewer councillors, thousands fewer members, and had five million voters turn away from us by the time we lost the 2010 general election.

By the time I got involved, the activist base had been seriously depleted and many members felt deeply disillusioned. Yet we need to remember that we are always the party that embraces hope, equality and prosperity for all, and that the Conservatives will always be the party of the few over the many (as they have shown with their National Insurance rise). It is cities like Liverpool, and communities like mine in Croxteth, that get a bad deal and suffer the most when Labour is not in power.

So, after too long in the political wilderness, and too much bickering in recent years, we must put our political differences aside and work together for a Labour victory at the next election, which may be only 18 months away. In recent years, however, many local parties have been taken over by activists who, in too many cases, perceive Labour’s time in government in a wholly negative way. There was ‘nothing to be proud of’ prior to 2015. The Iraq War is, and remains, a running sore (for understandable reasons, but the left does not have a monopoly on that).

However, New Labour’s entire economic policy is breezily dismissed as ‘neo-liberal’ or ‘Thatcherite’, despite the fact it delivered the longest continuous period of economic growth, creating millions of jobs, delivering a massive redistribution of wealth and tackling childhood poverty, as well as securing record investment in schools. (In fact, I was a direct beneficiary of this large-scale investment, thanks to the Building Schools for the Future programme – one of the very first things the Conservative government scrapped when they came to power in 2010.)

To dismiss achievements that have transformed millions of people’s lives is destructive and unhelpful. From Sure Start to pension winter fuel payments, from full employment to the 0.7%

international development pledge, there was much to be proud of from Labour's thirteen years in power.

So, let us start with the basics. The party needs to be welcoming and open; one of the points I made when I spoke at a conference a decade ago. When I first joined, we usually had a handful of the same members saying the same things at every meeting. These days, we have a handful of members who deliberately come to meetings to cause mischief and create an atmosphere that disenfranchises other members.

Meetings have become more aggressive and suspicious, with 'Point of order, Chair', becoming the key buzz phrase. These types of members, both past and present, are the ones you rarely see on the campaign trail or working in a marginal seat. All too often, campaigning becomes a second-order priority for them, which is to say, not a priority at all.

Too many local parties are afflicted by '*resolutionitis*' – a belief that you can change the world from inside a CLP meeting. Too often, campaigning, or a discussion on local and national issues, are not even on the agenda. I do not mean to sound dismissive, but that sense of entitlement, cossetted in a comfort zone of the like-minded, will keep Labour in opposition forever. It only takes a clique to poison a local party, and lots have been, to the detriment of Labour's electoral chances.

But campaigning is the only real priority. Politics is about winning in order to change things. Even when the Tories have been able to rely on spending more at election time, Labour's superior 'ground' game has often helped to level-off their financial advantage. But this is based on our local party organisation being in good shape. Our members and their grassroots campaigning are our secret weapon. I have seen it time and time again. In tight elections, the ability to keep on trudging up driveways, knocking on doors, calling people up, and stuffing leaflets through letterboxes, right until quarter-to-ten on election day, is what makes the difference between winning and losing a tight race.

Therefore, divided and ineffective local parties have a bottom-line consequence for Labour. If losing an election comes as a surprise, then you have not looked into the eyes of enough voters. It is that simple.

This is the irony of the swell in membership from 2015. In many respects, it has not led to a boost in activism across all constituencies. There is a focus on internal meetings but not an increase in campaigning. In that respect, the actual size of the membership is not a marker for the strength of the party. Granted, it has helped to improve Labour's finances, and I would never wish to argue for a smaller party that excluded people. But we must be clear that the priority is not ideological purity, or recrimination, or hero-worship, but getting a Labour government and Labour councillors elected for as long as possible and in the shortest possible timescale.

I think it is essential that we foster a happier, more tolerant and more inclusive culture across the party at all levels; one that is outward-looking and willing to meet the electorate on their terms. We must select candidates to represent us based on competency and experience, and we must promote ideas and policies that will change lives and reflect the best of Labour and its abiding values. It is only by facing up to our flaws and listening to the mood of the country that we will find our winning ways again.

There can be no more equivocation about it, for the sake of the people in this country, who desperately need a Labour government, we need to get serious again as a party and get back to winning elections.

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## **Part III: The election platform to win over target voters**

## **Chapter 10: The context for Labour's policy platform**

**By Atul Hatwal**

The task for Labour is to propose a policy platform that is both believable and will deliver tangible change for voters.

It needs to be sufficiently targeted to win over switchers who are unsure of Labour while also being radical enough to make a difference to their lives

The polling analysis in chapter 1 paints a picture of the core group who Labour needs to attract – voters from their mid-20s to their mid-50s. Voters whose concerns will range from the typical issues facing young people starting out such as how to buy their first home through the challenges and costs of family life through to the issues of social care.

Voters know that Labour is the party that will generally do more to look after public services, what we wanted to set out in this section are the sorts of specific policy commitments that could go on a pledge card. They're not the totality of what Labour could do but illustrative of the type of fully funded, carefully targeted proposals that would sway voters who were sceptical of Labour's 2019 laundry list manifesto and appeal in very a focused way to the switchers Labour needs to win the next election.

Most of all, the intent of these policies is to show a path to closing the deal with voters who think they'll potentially be better off under Labour than the Conservatives but aren't sure how.

## Chapter 11: Let's lift the burden on working families – make childcare free

by Kevin Meagher

Making the case for childcare support was a lonely position to take thirty years ago. I remember Harriet Harman writing a book on the subject in the early 1990s. She was routinely sneered at for pursuing what was often regarded as a professional woman's hobbyhorse. It's feminist special pleading, went the criticism; the middle-classes were expecting the state to subsidise their child-rearing, while they picked up the threads of their lucrative careers.

While in government after 1997, Labour moved to introduce their first childcare support measures like Sure Start as part of a package of reforms to improve early years development; undeterred, Harman would go on to become the first-ever Minister for Women. By then, changes in the labour market meant that millions of mothers – in far less salubrious jobs – had little choice but to return to work to help support their families, picking up the financial burden of childcare costs as they did so.

New Labour's [measures](#), such as the introduction of the first statutory childcare provisions for four-year-olds and the first National Childcare Strategy in 1998, were welcomed at the time but have proven over subsequent years to be insufficient in terms of meeting needs. Recently, changes under the Conservatives have been incremental and parsimonious, and the governmental support on offer today is both patchy and inadequate. As it stands, there are now up to 30 hours of free childcare available for the three and four-year-old children of working parents, which is equivalent to just four days a week (only during term time), with 15 hours available for non-working parents. In addition, disadvantaged families have access to support for two-year-olds, while other support is means-tested.

The main problem with the current entitlement is that it leaves gaping holes, especially during school holidays or early mornings and evenings (provision does not cover the whole working day), which forces parents to fund wraparound care themselves and offers no support for under-threes. As a result, [Daynurseries.co.uk](#), the UK's leading nursery review website, estimates the annual cost of sending a child under three to a nursery on a part-time basis for just 25 hours per week is £7,160, which is up from £6,800 in 2020. Hiring a childminder for the equivalent time is only slightly less expensive, averaging around £6,150 a year or around £118 a week. Less intensive support, such as an after-school club place, is approximately £62 a week.

Many families are caught in the trap of trying to work but having to do so with no support available for under-threes. Sheffield-based parent Ellen Barr is typical of many:

We would like our 18-month-old daughter to go to nursery when she is slightly older to socialise with other children, particularly as she missed out on so much being born just before the Covid-19 pandemic, but the fees are incredibly high, and that does put us off. [...] At the moment we are able to both work four days a week, and have help from family to cover childcare, but that may not be the case forever and it certainly isn't possible for a lot of other working parents. [...] The cost of putting our daughter into nursery on those three days alone would be the same as our mortgage payment. Where is the incentive for people to work if they are effectively punished by having to spend most of their salary on childcare?

It is hardly surprising that the UK has the second most expensive childcare system in the world, according to the [World Economic Forum](#). Indeed, it is seven times more expensive than Germany's, with working families here spending an average of 36% of their income on having their children taken care of. Above and beyond private family arrangements, there is little other

option. However, other countries have developed a better approach. In The Czech Republic, Austria and Italy, childcare costs account for less than 4% of family earnings, while [South Korea](#) has a heavily subsidised state system that provides basic childcare free of charge (although many families top up the subsidy to pay for more expensive private kindergartens).

Research by the campaign group [Pregnant Then Screwed](#) found that four-fifths of mothers are reliant on childcare to be able to work, yet half (51%) do not have the routine support in place to enable them to do their jobs, with many forced to make ends meet the best way they can. A survey of nearly 20,000 mothers and pregnant women back in July also found that nearly three-quarters (72%) said they had to work fewer hours because of gaps in their childcare support, while three-quarters of self-employed mums (74%) saw their earning power reduced because of a lack of affordable support. Furthermore, in a shocking finding, 46% of women who had been made redundant claimed that a lack of childcare provision played a part in them losing their jobs.

A recent report from the Trade Union Congress (TUC) had similar findings. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of working mums with primary-school-age children did not have sufficient childcare for the six-week school summer holidays; this figure rose to 76% for single parents. This echoes the findings of yet another report by the [Coram Family and Childcare Trust](#), Britain's oldest children's charity, which found that the average cost of a place at a holiday club is £145 per week, up 5% since their last survey in 2019, and more than double what parents pay for an after-school club during term time.

So, here we are, with a welter of evidence that working families are being crushed by the cost of childcare, whether in relation to finding an affordable nursery place, a childminder or an after-school/holiday club place. In very many instances, it hardly seems worthwhile for two parents to go out to work at all, yet other comparable countries see families spending a fraction of what we do. However, this is not the only issue. Shouldering childcare costs is the single biggest impediment to transitioning people from benefits and into work, or moving working mothers from part-time to full-time work; meanwhile, wages in the sector are low (half of childcare practitioners [earn less than £17,000](#)), provision is in short supply and costs are rising.

Childcare in Britain represents a perfect storm of policy failures, bringing financial misery to millions of working families, while the talent, skills and productivity of millions of working mothers are lost to our economy. We have too few providers, and while costs to consumers are high, those performing the work are poorly paid. This area is subsequently ripe for reform. Depressingly, this is not a situation that is likely to improve under the current government. In a recent statement responding to a parliamentary petition calling for an overhaul of childcare support, the Department for Education said it was 'not currently' planning a review, 'but we continue to evaluate the support on offer and endeavour to provide support to both parents and providers to ensure the sustainability of the sector.'

Not that the 2019 [Labour Manifesto](#) was much more ambitious:

Within five years, all 2, 3 and 4-year-olds will be entitled to 30 hours of free preschool education per week and access to additional hours at affordable, subsidised rates staggered with incomes. Labour will also work to extend childcare provision for 1-year-olds and to ensure that childcare provision accommodates the working patterns of all parents (p. 38).

There is no relief in prospect from the Conservatives, and the situation was only a bureaucratic, vague and medium-term priority for the previous Labour leadership. What is needed is a much bolder response – there must be recognition that our welfare state, which is supposed to nurture us from cradle to grave, does a poor job when it comes to supporting modern families; in most

cases, two parents need to go out to work, yet they suffer a crippling financial burden for doing so. Nevertheless, we are muddling through with a patchwork of entitlements and not the holistic policy that is required. A life lottery is at play here, with those fortunate enough to have an extended family that is willing to offer support being able to make the existing system stretch far enough, but those without fit and available grandparents are entirely reliant on a failing approach.

As a country, we need to shift gears. This faltering model has endured for too long. Affordable, high-quality childcare must be a cornerstone of the post-Covid recovery. Building back better should include making affordable childcare as much a part of our welfare provision as state pensions, and it should be seen as a prudent investment in the next generation's development. No more caveats and complexity. Just a new, universal support entitlement for working families. If you go out to work, the state will pick up the tab for your childcare. No ifs or buts. Just a clear commitment that childcare should be free at the point of need, freeing-up hard-pressed working families. It would also address poverty pay in the sector, drive-up standards and provide more consistent, high-quality care for our children, stretching from straight-up childcare across to holiday clubs and childminder places. Schools should also be repurposed to help out during holiday time.

The evidence from polling by Yonder for Labour Uncut on this issue is unequivocal. 72% of non-Labour voters considering backing Labour at the next election said that free childcare would make them more likely to vote Labour. Just 8% disagreed, a net majority of +64%. Slightly over 1 in 4 (27%) of these potential Labour switchers said that this policy would make them 'Much more likely' to vote Labour. The prospective electoral gains are as clear as they are significant.

There are three steps Labour should take.

First, Labour should commission a review of the financing of a universal childcare entitlement, which is similar to the one undertaken by [Andrew Dilnot](#) into adult social care a decade ago. It should start with a clear ambition to make provision comprehensive – from birth to school – and free, ending the failed hybrid model where there is some state support but families are expected to make up the difference.

Second, there should also be a legal right to flexible work for all workers from their first day in a job without the possibility of operational impediment hanging over them. This should include more part-time opportunities, home-working and job-sharing. It might also help ease the need for childcare in the first place. In addition, Labour should commit to introducing legislation to provide ten days of annual carers' leave for parents, which is line with what the TUC has been pressing for. Currently, there is no statutory provision for parents and carers to take time off to look after their children in emergencies.

Third, these reforms should sit as part of a wider framework of bold social policy improvements like the urgent reform of Universal Credit, which involves reintroducing a binding target to end childhood poverty, including scrapping the Tories' wretched two-child penalty for child benefit payments, and sorting out the funding and quality mess that bedevils adult care. These and other issues should become the focus of a new [Social Justice Commission](#) like the one established by the late John Smith when he was Labour leader, which went on to frame the last Labour government's approach after 1997. It should also recommend workforce improvements to increase the supply and quality of the childcare sector in response to the Conservatives scrapping the Children's Workforce Development Council in 2010.

Finally, the politics needs to be ironed out. A bold, clear offer needs to be made to remove the burden of childcare costs from working families. This would see a family with two children

under three save an average of £14,000 a year. Social justice, economic efficiency and political popularity would all be there in a single policy. It is the right thing to do for working families and the economy, and a sure-fire winner on the doorstep.

*Kevin Meagher is author of 'What a Bloody Awful Country: Northern Ireland's Century of Division', 'A United Ireland: Why Unification Is Inevitable and How It Will Come About' and Associate Editor of Labour Uncut*

## **Chapter 12: Labour must resurrect the dream of home ownership**

**By James Wright**

I am 38 years old and married with two kids. We live in a nice part of Trafford, Greater Manchester. My wife and I have been privately renting since 2006, the year after we graduated. In that time, we have spent circa £170,000 on rent.

When I started the research for this article and worked out that figure for the first time, I was genuinely left open-mouthed. I knew we had spent thousands on rent in the last fifteen years, but realising we have paid our various landlords around £20k short of the average cost to buy a property in Greater Manchester is both depressing and quite sad. I am sure people will ask why we have thrown so much money down the drain. Well, it is quite simple really; if you want to live on your own or with your partner rather than relying on your parents because you cannot or do not want to, and you choose to have children, the majority of us simply cannot afford to buy a home.

The reason we have spent nearly £200,000 on rent in the past fifteen years is because it was our only option. We didn't have the £20,000 deposit we would have needed to buy a home in 2006, we had no real housing need to join the social housing waiting list. Our only option was the private sector, and our rent has nearly trebled since 2006. Most people in private accommodation spend between 30% and 50% of their income solely on rent. In London, this can be substantially more. At what point could anyone begin to make savings that amount to something large enough to buy a home?

As a party, we have a duty to resolve this issue. The market will never resolve it on its own, and there will always be people lucky enough to have parents who will gift or lend their children the cash for a deposit. However, what about the majority who aren't this lucky? Those who are stuck in an endless cycle of extortionate rental costs, profiteering landlords and the threat of being asked to move on, often with only two months' notice? We know we must tackle the housing crisis and that begins right at the bottom by building more social and affordable homes. We absolutely have to do this. We will never solve the housing crisis without providing good, quality and secure homes to people on the lowest incomes.

However, as a party, we also need to attract and support those who quite rightly have the aspiration to own their own home. To do this, we cannot continue down the route taken by the current government. On a surface level, Help to Buy sounds like a great idea. Indeed, for some, it has helped them to buy a home. Nevertheless, in the long term, it will simply further inflate house prices and make it even harder for the next generation of first-time buyers to get on the ladder.

The following points are what I believe could really help to get people back on the ladder and also tackle the housing crisis at the same time:

1. A Secretary of State for Housing

The housing crisis is one of the most difficult challenges we face as a nation. Why is it lumped in with communities and local government and now levelling up almost as an afterthought? It is about time the government gave it the importance it deserved and created a Ministry for Housing. The Tories do not take the housing crisis seriously as the majority of their voters already own their own home. The under-40s struggling to buy a place to live have already moved away from voting Conservative. Consequently, it's not their priority and it shows.

2. Improve and enhance existing options

There are numerous options out there, which are supposedly available to help people get onto the property ladder. These include an umbrella of choices that fall under the 'affordable housing' slogan; of course, this includes the government's flagship help-to-buy scheme. Two of these options are shared ownership and rent to buy. Both of these opportunities are actually pretty good for those of us who can access them. The problem is that most of us simply cannot because not enough properties are being built and not enough homes are being set aside for affordable housing.

Rent to Buy, for example, is actually a really clever way of getting someone into the housing market. You rent a home at an intermediate rent for a period of five years, which then gives you the ability to save for a deposit. Subsequently, you purchase that home after five years at market value with the deposit you have saved for, meaning the housing association or council you buy it from doesn't lose out like it does under right to buy as you pay market value with no discount. This enables the RP and/or council to fund the replacement of this home rather than effectively losing another element of their housing stock under the right to buy where the discount makes building a replacement almost impossible.

Rent to Buy is an existing scheme, but try finding a developer where this is available anywhere in the UK! It is almost impossible. Therefore, why are the government failing to get private landlords around the table and not discussing extending this scheme to them? What is stopping the government and would-be governments formed by our party from subsidising the rent of someone renting privately as part of a scheme like Rent to Buy in order for them to save for a deposit on a house? Currently, they may not be able to buy the house they are renting because the landlord may not want to sell. However, if private tenants were given a five-year tenancy (legislation would have to be brought in to allow for this) and the government subsidised 20% of their rent, this would at last give people the opportunity to save money for a deposit. Clearly, there would have to be a legal requirement for the savings to be made; for instance, the government could pay the 20% subsidy at the end of the rental period once a mortgage for a new property has been secured.

Shared ownership is another reasonably good option for people who only have enough of the necessary deposit saved up to purchase half of their home; they could rent out the other half until they can afford to staircase up to buy the entire property. Nevertheless, in my view, it does not offer the same advantages as Rent to Buy because you still require a deposit and staircasing up assumes your income will increase over a period of a few years. As we all know, incomes have actually fallen since 2010 and house prices have risen.

Help to Buy, on the face of it, seems great. The government gives you an equity loan, there is no need for a deposit, you buy the home, the government underwrites the mortgage, and you own your own home. Simple? Well, not really. Only new builds are included in the scheme, for a start. In addition, as I have already discussed, not enough are being built. Help to Buy is disproportionately available on flats and apartments in comparison with houses, which is not great if you have children. It also inflates housing prices. Developers know their property is underwritten; they sell very quickly and do nothing to help with demand. It is also worth noting that there are caps on the value of a home. For example, where I live in the North West, the cap is £224,000. In many parts of the North West, this would buy you a decent home; however, in Trafford, this is around £125,000 short of me being able to buy an equivocal house to the one I am currently renting. New builds are also more expensive to buy than other homes.

Help to Buy could work if it was extended to all first-time buyers who cannot afford a deposit and was opened up to the whole housing market. Scrapping the house-price cap would also enable people who live in areas where the cap does not meet their requirements to take advantage of the scheme.

### 3. The mortgage sector

I am too young to remember the time of walking into your local bank, asking for the manager and requesting a mortgage or loan. My parents tell me this was commonplace back in the good old days. If you wanted a mortgage, you would pop in, sign a few papers and your local bank manager would review your financial circumstances and make a personal judgement on whether he believes you are a good or a bad risk. Fast-forward to 2021 and to say things are different would be an understatement! You generally apply online or via the telephone, and if the computer says no, you have had it. There is no personal consideration of your circumstances. If your financial profile does not meet their criteria on paper, you will not get a mortgage. The computer still says no.

If we go back to the beginning of this piece, I talked about that eye-watering figure of £170,000 being spent on rent over the last fifteen years. I do not have a deposit big enough to buy a home. That rules me and millions of others out of 99% of all mortgages on the market. To the mortgage company, we are too big a risk. We do not have the money to put down, so they cannot possibly lend us the full value of our home. This is even though we can prove to them that during the past fifteen years, we have not missed one rent payment, we have paid more than half the cost of a mortgage in rent, both of us have good credit histories and we have good, reliable and secure jobs. They consider us and millions of others a bigger risk than someone who has none of that financial record but does have a wealthy mother and/or father who can gift/lend them thirty or forty thousand pounds. It is utter madness in my view. How many of us can prove to a bank that we have never missed a rent payment, have likely paid more in rent than we would towards a mortgage over the past fifteen years and are therefore a much smaller risk than someone who can prove none of that?

This is where we have to intervene in the market as a party and change the culture of lending. If we are serious about people getting on the property ladder and securing a home for themselves and their family, why are we letting corporate banks and their super computers and algorithms decide whether or not someone is eligible for what used to be the simplest of things, a loan to buy a house?

People may respond to this and ask if I am advocating the return of 100% mortgages. Yes, I absolutely am. However, the last time this product was available on the market, most infamously with the failed lender, Northern Rock, they were sold callously and inappropriately. This time, we would not rely simply on credit checks and risk profiles designed by an information technology expert, we would rely on proper scrutiny of someone's personal circumstances and, most importantly, their rental history. Surely, someone who has a long history of making rental payments (often more per month than the monthly cost of an actual mortgage), with no instances of failed payments, is a really attractive proposition to a lender? They have a proven history of being committed to paying for their home. What more could a lender ask for?

In summary, we need to tackle the housing crisis and take it very seriously. None of what I have discussed in this article is possible without us tackling the housing crisis right at the ground level and building more social and affordable homes. However, as a party, we must support aspiration among young people and enable them to buy their own home like generations before them did as a matter of course. We need to build on what is already there by enhancing existing options and avoiding doing what the Tories have done, which is to only pay lip service to necessary reforms. Make them accessible and available to all. Furthermore, we must reform the mortgage industry so that risk is identified in a different way. We cannot

allow the market to go on punishing people because they do not have wealthy parents or because they have not benefited from a large inheritance.

Home ownership should not be dependent on how much cash you have up front. On the contrary, it should be about whether you can prove you can afford a mortgage.

*Councillor James Wright is the Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration at Trafford Council*

## **Chapter 13: We need to have an honest conversation with the public about social care**

**By Joanne Harding**

‘If you neglect physical infrastructure, you get roads full of potholes and buckling bridges, which prevent your economy functioning properly. The same is true if you fail to invest in social infrastructure.’ These were the words Liz Kendall used as she addressed a conference of directors of social care back in April this year. I think we can all agree that social care has been neglected by successive governments for years. The question is what could and should Labour do to truly address what I believe to be one of the most difficult policy challenges of our times. One of the fundamental issues with social care is that people do not really understand what it is. It is incredibly difficult to define as it ranges from supporting a person to wash and eat, to administering medication, to safeguarding, protection of liberty and to end-of-life care. It is inextricably linked with health by virtue of some of the elements of personal care, yet it is so much more than health.

However, it does not have the same branding as the National Health Service (NHS) that we all recognise and hold dear to us as a beacon of all that is good. Politicians talk about health and social care, yet they continue to leave it out in the cold when it comes to policy and funding conversations. This lack of focus on social care is reflected in public attitudes - in polling conducted by Yonder for Labour Uncut, when respondents were presented with a list of 11 different policy and just 6% of voters picked social care as the highest priority.

In fact, as I looked through the most recent National Policy Forum interim report from Labour, I was disappointed but not surprised that no real attention was paid to social care until several pages into the document. It does not attract the same attention as a hero workforce and life-saving and ground-breaking treatments do. Nevertheless, make no mistake about it, social care encompasses every single one of these things and more.

Labour therefore has a role to play in changing the narrative among its members and the wider public. Maybe then, we can have a more honest conversation about the areas I feel we need to tackle if we are to reform and transform social care.

### **Funding reform**

This will surely be considered the most contentious and difficult element of our policy work. If we truly want a publicly funded social care system in England, we need to establish how we are going to pay for it. Projected growth on spending for social care is simply not in line with predicted growth pressures, which are rising at 3.7% annually in real terms. More than 1 million people aged 65 or over will require varying degrees of social care support by 2035; this is up from 783,000 individuals in 2015. As people live longer and advances in medicine and assistive technology support people to live with chronic and long-term health issues, greater strain will be put on an already creaking system.

We know we cannot simply stand still as we will have a predicted gap of £3.5 billion to fill by 2025 to maintain our existing standards of care, which are frankly failing too many people. [Age UK](#) reports that 1.5 million people living in the UK have an unmet care need and if current trends continue, this could grow to 2.1 million. Furthermore, the government have offered short-term bungs over the years to paper over the cracks. Relying on a council tax precept and business rates cannot possibly be a sustainable funding model for an infrastructure that is so vital to a healthy society. It also creates inequity in local authorities that will be living with greater health inequalities and higher levels of poverty. Current provisions are truly a postcode lottery.

Johnson's statement to the House of Commons last week has done nothing to reassure those of us who live and breathe social care that reform is coming anytime soon. The majority of the income generated by a regressive national insurance rise will not really go towards funding social care. For three years, all of the money will go towards easing the NHS backlog; in fact, only £5.4 billion of the £36 billion will head in the direction of social care. Councils may well be forced to raise council tax yet again in order to meet demand. Social care is in crisis right here, right now. The Tory Party's talk of funding and reform are actually just warm words.

In 2010, the [Dilnot Commission](#) put forward the recommendation of a lifetime cap on care. This alone is not the solution to longer-term social care investment reform, but it does go some way to protecting families against catastrophic care costs. Consequently, this is something that I do believe Labour should push to be implemented. The original recommendations were initially accepted in 2013 but have never actually been applied. The cap on care is the right thing to do, but that will not come into place until 2023 and such a measure actually does nothing to reform the system.

Keir Starmer has put forward some potential solutions in relation to a wealth tax, which would involve taxing the income of landlords, and those who buy and sell large quantities of financial assets, stocks and shares. Clearly, more detail is needed from Labour, but how about if Labour shifted the narrative and did not actually talk about funding? Let us instead talk about investment. Then, when we come to the point of putting forward potential solutions, we are framing the discussions as the right thing to do (of course they are, but we need to be really clear as to why), because the cost of not reforming social care funding is just as important.

When Labour talks about the home first model, which I will always champion, we need to tell the story of what this means for older and disabled people who rely on social care. We must stop framing the debate around older people having to sell their homes and instead talk about the fact that one-third of social care users are working-aged adults and how half of the budget is utilised in conjunction with their needs. The [King's Fund](#) explains in more detail some of the options that Labour may want to consider, but this is not an area that the party can continue to fudge; as has been said before, if not now, when?

We noted earlier that the public do not fully understand what social care is and the role of care in our society. What has become apparent to me as a councillor with portfolio responsibility is that they understand even less how care is funded and paid for. Indeed, it can come as an incredible shock to many families when they have to make decisions about a loved one going into a residential setting. The public are under the impression that care fees are picked up by the NHS or that councils pay the bill. In fact, Ipsos Mori polling from 2008 (that contributed to the green paper, 'Shaping the Future of Care Together') showed that many people simply cannot distinguish between the NHS and social care. If people genuinely believe this and want it to be true, it would therefore make more sense for Labour to open up discussions in our communities in these post-Covid times. We should work to ensure people really do understand how social care functions by talking about it with the same passion as we do with regard to the NHS. Labour must start to develop and promote a vision of social care in the very same way that Nye Bevan did in relation to our health service.

Families and loved ones saw for themselves the way care homes (not just for older people but also for those adults living with a learning disability) were impacted during the COVID-19 crisis. It was an underfunded and undervalued sector that was ill-equipped to cope with a global pandemic. Labour must now set out its stall with a ten-year plan that outlines our need to invest in the development of a social care system that is sustainably well-funded, well-staffed and fit for the future.

## Healthy communities

‘Don’t we all want to live in the place we call home, with the people and things that we love, in communities where we look out for one another, doing the things that matter to us?’ This is an excellent quote from Social Care Future who I have had the great pleasure of being connected with over the past few years. They are a growing movement of people who know what they need to live healthy and fulfilling lives, and they are among the people that Labour must start listening to and involving as we develop our vision for social care provisions that are fit for purpose in the future.

When we are fit and well, we take for granted that we will live in our own home, surrounded by the people and things we love. Social care must always be about allowing people to make their own choices and empowering them to live independent lives. The vision we set for the future cannot be developed by politicians and policy wonks alone. Only this week I have been made aware of policy discussions and panel sessions taking place at a national level that have not involved people who are directly impacted by decisions on social care. Social Care Future have led the calls that say enough is enough with regard to the tokenism in this area. Labour can lead the charge and ensure that our National Policy Forum sessions are not just about members sitting in a room, talking about privatisation in the NHS.

Social care is a force for good; it empowers, enables and supports people to live independent lives. We must talk about social care in the same way we do about the NHS; it is as vital to our daily lives as health services are and not just something that is tagged on at the end when people start to struggle. Keeping communities healthy and well is a must if we wish to avert a continued crisis across social care. Flicking the switch towards well-being and prevention of ill health must be a central tenet of the Labour Party’s health policy. The public health grant in 2020/2021 was 22% lower in real terms compared to 2015/2016, and this was with a recent uplift.

Social care as a portfolio not only covers older people’s care but also substance misuse, mental health and learning disabilities. Labour must commit to reinvesting in public health and ensuring prevention is a prioritised policy area. When invested in properly, sexual health, smoking cessation, healthy weight and drug and alcohol services are able to provide those early interventions that keep our communities well.

As we reset and rebuild from Covid, we must not lose sight of the creativity that has flourished at a community level. Many community-based and voluntary groups have come together to start to develop their own solutions that enable people to live independent, rich and fulfilling lives. Alongside public health and prevention work, Labour must make an absolute commitment to integrating housing into our health and social care vision. The time has come where we must stop merely mentioning health inequalities. We will commit as part of party policy to implement the recommendations of the [Marmot Review](#). Only with a true collaboration of public, private and voluntary sectors can we ever hope to achieve a generational shift in health inequalities.

All this being said, the government has made the decision to dismantle Public Health England and look into establishing a new National Institute for Health and Protection. Alongside a complete restructuring of the Health and Social Care Act, these changes present us with risks and are causing unrest and uncertainty in an already exhausted system. There is disruption ahead, and it is up to Labour to really hold the Conservatives’ feet to the fire, while not getting caught up in old arguments about US care systems coming for the NHS. Our party has to be mature enough to scrutinise the bill and not look to throw away the advantages that can be garnered from our duty to collaborate; in other words, we need to improve communication

between the health and social care sectors, repeal legislation that encourages people to be taken home quickly from hospital and work towards a proper, national regulatory framework for social care.

I will finish where I started: social care has had one too many potholes and buckling bridges. As we start to set out our policy vision, Labour has an opportunity to truly build our social care bridges back better.

*Joanne Harding is Executive Member for Adult Social Care in Trafford and carries out consultancy and leadership training for local government*

## **Chapter 14: The Northern Ireland Protocol must be defended**

**By Matthew O'Toole**

If Boris Johnson actually cared, it would not be so bad. His and his government's wilful disavowal of a treaty they signed (and trumpeted in an election campaign), their intermittent gaslighting of people and businesses in Northern Ireland – if any of it was based on sincere conviction, it would be easier to stomach. This is alongside the empowering of extremists representing glorified crime gangs and the naked refusal to acknowledge the plain facts of international trade.

Political actors in Northern Ireland of all shades do not just distrust the Johnson Government and its approach to the protocol, they are in fact disoriented by it. Since everyone has been lied to, there is now next to no reserve of trust from which UK ministers can draw as Brexit makes relationships sharper and more difficult. So, what should happen now? Part of the answer lies in remembering the lessons of the past: the importance of delivering on commitments made in good faith and avoiding the crude assertion of British sovereignty in Northern Ireland as if it were the same as Suffolk.

Conservative indifference to the consequences for the island of Ireland of English political choices is nothing new. Whatever Northern Ireland's future constitutional arrangements, defending pluralist institutions and British–Irish relations from thuggish Tory nationalism will require an active and engaged Labour Party. That should start with delivery of the complex and imperfect commitments in the European Union's (EU's) withdrawal agreement.

One hundred years ago, the Westminster political class was bored of Ireland. The subject had dominated parliamentary debate on a recurring basis for at least four decades. From the perspectives of both the Liberals and Labour who had supported successive attempts at home rule, and the Tories who had opposed them (first in relation to all of Ireland and latterly for the province of Ulster), the complicated denouements of 1920 and 1921 signalled that it was time to move on from the Irish question.

First, the Government of Ireland Act of 1920 provided for the exclusion of six northern counties from any form of self-governing proto-independent state. Then, after months more of fighting between republicans and the British state, by the end of 1921, a treaty providing the institution of a 'free state' with dominion status in the other 26 counties was agreed upon between Lloyd George's government and Sinn Fein, which subsequently split, yet the treaty itself survived.

As Charles Townshend's new book on partition points out, many MPs were exasperated at the oxygen consumed by the Irish question by 1921, and the demands of unionism were very much included in that category. Then, as now, there was a striking disinclination to view said Irish question as one in which English politics and English power were implicated; or to put it more directly, there was no desire to suggest that English politicians were in large part responsible for what was going on across the Irish Sea. For better or worse, Irish issues were to be marginal in British politics (notwithstanding the fact that part of Ireland remained in the UK) for the next half century. In that sense, one of the main aims of Lloyd George's government – to stop talking about Ireland – was overwhelmingly delivered.

What does any of this have to do with 2021 and the question of how the UK government – and British politics in general – approaches the implementation of another treaty, the EU withdrawal agreement, and specifically the protocol on Northern Ireland? It needs to be underlined that nothing happens in the British–Irish relationship outside the historical burden of that relationship; also, it must be noted this relationship is marked by asymmetry in terms of both power and knowledge. Where London possesses the greater power - and not only over the

jurisdiction where it is the sovereign power - Ireland (by which I mean the island and both historic traditions) possesses the greater memory and knowledge of both historical fact and grievances.

From London, it can sometimes seem like political memories begin in 1998, the signing of the Good Friday Agreement and the transmutation of British–Irish diplomatic relations into one long decorous performance of mutual affection, which was the case with the Queen’s box office state visit to Dublin in 2011. The more useful thing to remember than how pleasant that visit was is why it was so historic in the first place – despite being in her mid-80s, she had never before set foot in the South, a place where she would have been head of state had she acceded to the throne three years earlier.

The Johnson government is particularly disposed to being flippant about their obligations in Northern Ireland and indeed their obligations to the British–Irish relationship in a broader sense. Despite what they may wish, these two things are intimately related. It was the softening of the British/Irish sovereignty question in performative as well as substantive ways, which created the entire context for power sharing and the post-1998 settlement. It is also arguable that it was this flippancy that led Johnson and his Brexit amanuensis, David Frost, to agree to a revised protocol on the basis of changes to the previously agreed backstop, which they had rubbished as unacceptable in mid-2019 before Johnson entered Downing Street. Those alterations amounted to increasing the potential for regulatory and legal divergence between Britain and Northern Ireland more sharply by removing the mechanism for GB–EU alignment in the absence of something more permanent that the more sincerely unionist Theresa May had agreed back in 2018.

Since signing that deal, the UK Government’s conduct has successively involved denial, deflection and occasional outright deceit. The protocol forms a large part of the withdrawal agreement on which its gigantic majority was won in December 2019. Having won such a large victory on the back of the deal, it was perhaps unsurprising that British ministers were initially keen to elide some of the more controversial parts of the protocol, namely the potential for checks in the Irish Sea. They approached this sleight in different ways.

In the early months of 2020, Michael Gove highlighted the potential economic benefits of the protocol (which are vast but ironically based on retaining the kind of market access exporters in Britain have lost due to Brexit). This approach was at least far superior to the irresponsibility of his former Vote Leave accomplice and the current Prime Minister. Boris Johnson used a general election campaign event in Belfast (a tragicomic election time obligation for all Tory leaders given the risible vote the party achieves in Northern Ireland) to encourage businesses to rip up any new paperwork they were asked to complete as a result of his deal with the EU. The extent to which the political and media classes are inured to Johnson’s mendacity was highlighted by this episode. It seemed almost unthinkable that a head of government would simply deny the legal requirements imposed by an international treaty he had only just signed. Ever since then, both before and after the EU’s ill-judged attempt to invoke Article 16 over vaccine supplies in January, discourse by the UK government and the media has often been based on the remarkable proposition that the EU is solely responsible for the consequences of decisions by successive UK governments.

This was exemplified by a surreal episode of *The Andrew Marr Show* at the end of May, conducted during Edwin Poots’ momentary leadership of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). Marr allowed the Agriculture Minister – who in February unilaterally stood down port staff on the basis of his own assessment of ‘threats’ from sources he would not disclose – to make lurid claims about threats to peace without being challenged. Marr then lambasted the EU’s Vice-President, Maros Sefcovic, who was ordered to respond to Poots’ claims as if they

were gospel, and of course no other representative from Northern Ireland was invited onto the programme. The truth is that the DUP, which is being increasingly egged on by the Tory government and is always spoiling for a fight with Brussels as a cheap distraction from their daily scandal, has sought to portray the workings of the protocol as apocalyptic for Northern Ireland's society and its economy.

Of course, it has been disruptive. Britain is the biggest source of goods-based imports for the Northern Irish economy, and so the presence of a new customs and regulatory threshold was always going to be troublesome. Much of this has been eased by the extension of grace periods, and much of it has mitigated through the process of becoming familiarised by businesses and officials. However, the idea that Northern Ireland has experienced severe shortages or mass unrest is not just exaggeration but outright fabrication. The street violence that erupted over Easter was a grim and chilling throwback, and the presence of the so-called Irish Sea border was undoubtedly part of the context for the rioting, but it clearly was not the only, or even the primary, motivation. Anger over the policing of a prominent Irish Republican Army (IRA) funeral, a release of post-lockdown energy and a longer-term sense of marginalisation among working-class Protestant communities all contributed to the unrest.

It is important not to dismiss or deny the genuine sense of unionist unease and anger about the principle of the protocol, but it is also vital to keep both the scale of the anger and the actual scope of the issues created by the protocol in proportion. In 1974 and 1985, respectively, the years of the Sunningdale power-sharing initiative and the Anglo-Irish Agreement, unionists successfully mobilised tens – if not hundreds – of thousands of protesters onto the streets in anger at the constitutional implications of the aforementioned initiatives. In the 1990s, thousands protested over the Drumcree parade dispute and even the Good Friday Agreement itself. This year, even the highest-profile organised protests have struggled to attract numbers beyond the low hundreds; this is despite months of intense local media focus on unionist grievance, which has often bordered on overexposure and non-stop social media agitation.

Second, while many consumers and small businesses have experienced frustration at extra processes in terms of moving goods from Britain, the effects are disproportionately in specific sectors – notably, the movement of plant and animal produce. This is caused by the existence of a border in relation to what are called sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) regulations. Nevertheless, here is a critical point: there always was a theoretical and nascent Irish Sea border in relation to such regulations for the unavoidable reason that imposing a border in relation to plant and animal standards on a small island with an integrated ecology and agricultural sector would be logistically impossible. There are farms that straddle the border and livestock that graze on both sides of it – presumably unaware of its existence. The all-Ireland dairy sector would be unviable in its current form if there was an SPS border disrupting the movement of the millions of tonnes of milk that go north and south every month.

Moreover, of course it is false to claim (though it is still claimed regularly) that the withdrawal agreement prioritises north–south relationships over east–west ones. The only north–south border that the protocol inhibits is one relating to goods, but most of the economic activity is in services, and Northern Ireland – like the rest of the UK – is outside the single market for services. This is why there is a hardening border in terms of a whole range of areas not covered by goods – from the possibility of roaming charges, the loss of the cross-border healthcare directive to the effective destruction of the all-Ireland banking sector.

The upshot of the position taken by most unionist politicians, which is simply to remove the protocol, is that the situation is represented in a counterfactual way, or in such a manner that the world without the protocol would bring back life and commerce as it was before Brexit. Of course, this is not how things are, nor is it how they can be. As GB-based exporters, travelling

musicians and supermarket logistics managers know all too well, that world is gone. What none of those groups have been able to harness is the economic potential offered by the protocol, which allows goods to move seamlessly from Northern Ireland into both the UK and the EU single markets. On top of that, people born in Northern Ireland have a permanent right to EU citizenship via the Republic. If the UK and EU can collectively agree on processes to minimise the disruption to goods-based imports from Britain into Northern Ireland, that would be welcome, but it should also be matched by a commitment to maximise possibilities for businesses and young people from participation in European programmes, such as Erasmus and the European Green Deal.

If the posturing by the government turns out to have been a misjudged tactic for getting the EU to agree to a less rigorous regime regarding certain goods being checked, that is one thing. The EU will legitimately point out that the most straightforward way to minimise checks – an EU–UK veterinary agreement – is one that the UK has refused to engage in on anything other than the most unrealistic terms. The EU might also point out that the UK’s decision to turn the presence of an EU office in Belfast into a symbolic fight during the negotiations removed one very clear means of ensuring flexibility. It bound the EU directly into the ground delivery of the protocol and also allowed for the physical presence of Northern Irish politicians, businesses and stakeholders to lobby and engage on relevant EU rules, making it the very definition of a pyrrhic victory.

However, if Frost and Johnson are serious about forcing a real confrontation over the implementation of a deal they signed, which offers the Northern Ireland economy the rare opportunity (perhaps unprecedented in the century since partition) of meaningful competitive advantage, it will be a tragic and avoidable repeat of some of the worst Tory habits in relation to Ireland.

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## **Chapter 15: Labour's post-war greats, Attlee and Bevin, defined progressive patriotism. The party needs that spirit now**

by Mike Gapes

In the eleven years since Labour was last in government, the UK and the world have seen a significant shift towards nationalist, inward-looking policies. There has been weakening of global multilateral institutions and UK influence in the world, and our soft power has been reduced principally by the self-harm of a hard Brexit and the acrimonious wrangling about the Northern Ireland Protocol. Nevertheless, far more significant for the future of the world have been changes brought about by developments in the United States, which is moving erratically away from a global interventionist role; the continuing economic and military rise of the Chinese Party/State with its authoritarian model and Belt and Road imperialism; by the turmoil in the Arab and Muslim world; the massive impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in largely unvaccinated Latin America and Africa, and the accelerating and destructive impact of global warming.

Labour Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, and Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, played a decisive role in creating the institutions of the modern era, including the United Nations, insisting on there being a permanent UK seat on the Security Council and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). Those international institutions and others like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which were established after the Second World War, are now facing severe challenges.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union thirty years ago and the ending of the Warsaw Pact, the Atlantic Alliance was successfully transformed from a Cold War defence institution into a political entity; it is now recognised as a regional security organisation by the United Nations. NATO enlarged to include the former GDR, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Croatia, Albania, North Macedonia and Montenegro. Many other countries worldwide, including the EU members Sweden, Finland, Austria, Malta and the Irish Republic have partnership arrangements with NATO. Indeed, NATO remains vital for peace and security in Europe. After the Trump shock, the new US President, Joe Biden, claimed that 'America is back'. His words provided reassurance but Biden's betrayal of the women of Afghanistan has caused consternation among the US' allies worldwide. Frontline NATO countries like Poland and the Baltic States face increasing cyber threats and aggressive behaviour by Putin's Russia in Ukraine and elsewhere. It is no longer just France that questions whether Europe can depend upon the US indefinitely for extended deterrence of Russian aggression.

Although the UK has left the EU, it could still act as an important and close partner to it on defence, security and foreign policy, but Johnson's Vote Leave government has shown no interest in doing that. Closer formal institutional co-operation between the EU and NATO remains blocked due to the longstanding divisions between Greece and Turkey over Cyprus. Consequently, Labour should reflect on the legacy of its patriotic, internationalist and humanitarian interventionist traditions. As well as standing firm against the threat of Stalinist Communism in Europe and supporting the Berlin airlift, the Attlee Labour government also supported the United Nations' military intervention to stop and repulse the Communist advance in Korea, without which there would be no prosperous, dynamic and democratic South Korea today. Labour in government can indeed make a difference.

The Blair government said it would introduce ‘an ethical dimension’ to UK foreign policy (not ‘an ethical foreign policy’ as is sometimes wrongly claimed). It immediately re-joined UNESCO, established a separate Department for International Development, doubled the aid budget, introduced an annual human rights report, instituted transparency and quarterly reports to Parliament on arms exports, signed the Ottawa Treaty banning landmines and played a major role in getting the Arms Trade Treaty off the ground, limiting small arms. It also introduced the Armed Forces Covenant. Moreover, the Blair Government intervened to stop ethnic cleansing in Kosovo and to restore a democratic government in Sierra Leone. A big majority in Parliament voted for the UN-backed intervention in Afghanistan after 9/11 and for the controversial intervention in Iraq, which removed Saddam’s Baathist fascist regime. Overall, the records of the Blair and Brown governments on foreign, defence and aid policies were good ones. Regrettably, many party members will not be aware of this because the last two leaders failed to defend that record and allowed Labour’s opponents to define the terms of debate. Ed Miliband misguidedly adopted a year-zero approach in 2010 and of course Jeremy Corbyn was only interested in trashing that record and focusing on Iraq, Iraq, Iraq (and Palestine).

Over the last decade, the international community, including the Labour leadership, failed the Syrian people when they desperately needed humanitarian intervention, safe corridors and no-fly zones. Instead, they got Islamist terror, Russian bombing and Iranian militias as millions were displaced or forced to flee as refugees.

During the Labour leadership campaign Keir Starmer gave firm commitments to root out antisemitism, but on foreign, defence and security policy he had little to say. What little he did say is very worrying for those of us who support humanitarian intervention against ethnic cleansing and genocide and believe that the international community has a moral duty and a responsibility to protect vulnerable and oppressed people.

Starmer’s ten pledges (<https://keirstarmer.com/plans/10-pledges/>) were crafted to win support from the Corbynite left, and all he said on foreign policy was this:

Promote peace and human rights. No more illegal wars. Introduce a Prevention of Military Intervention Act and put human rights at the heart of foreign policy. Review all UK arms sales and make us a force for international peace and justice.

The ‘illegal wars’ were undefined, presumably because he wanted to send a dog whistle to opponents of the controversial, yet not illegal, intervention in Iraq. Furthermore, a Prevention of Military intervention Act could have ruled out interventions in Sierra Leone or Kosovo.

His rival, Lisa Nandy, was far more outspoken when challenging the Corbynite past, including in terms of her support of humanitarian intervention. Following his decisive victory, Starmer appointed Nandy as Shadow Foreign Secretary and John Healey as Shadow Defence Secretary. Meanwhile, Corbyn had been the Chair of the Stop the War (or more accurately, the Stop the West) Coalition. He had appointed pro-Putin journalist, Seumas Milne, and ex-Communist, Andrew Murray, as his key advisers. As Lisa Nandy has said, ‘we got it wrong on Russia’ and Labour’s attitude to Putin’s Russia has changed most dramatically. Nandy and Stephen Kinnock have also been outspoken on China, expressing strong support for Hong Kong’s democrats and for Magnitsky sanctions on Communist Chinese officials over the appalling crimes being carried out against the Muslim Uighurs.

In June 2020, Labour sent out documents as part of its policy review consultation (see <https://www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/>). The document entitled ‘Championing Internationalism in the Post-coronavirus World’ was very short at a length of just seven pages and says very little:

Across the world, conflicts continue unabated in fragile states [...] such as in Syria, Yemen and Libya [...] there are unresolved political tensions where human security and civil liberties are regularly by passed, such as in Kashmir, Hong Kong, Venezuela and Iran. [...] There has been a regression of international law and respect for human life such as the planned annexation of the occupied West Bank and the plight of the Uigurs and the Rohingya.

Incredibly, there was no mention of NATO at all, no reference to levels of defence spending, no reference to Trident or nuclear deterrence and no direct reference to the defence industry or to arms exports. There was only this: ‘we must find a way to better utilise [...] the expertise of our worker forces, trades unions, and British defence manufacturers for the benefit of partners around the world’.

There was no party conference in 2020 due to the Coronavirus. An interim report by the International Policy Commission was published in December 2020, and there were two subsequent reports on veterans and gender equality in development. The interim report added little detail to the initial document and once again failed to mention NATO at all. It simply said, ‘cooperation with partner countries means progressing beyond old power and trade relationships to a new footing of equal partnership’. Submissions to the policy review from members, local parties and affiliates closed on 20 July 2021. I understand that the majority were about Palestine. It is intended that the commissions will present their reports to the September 2021 conference.

A major test for Starmer and Nandy will be whether they can manage the transition to a more nuanced and balanced view of the world. Their speeches in the special parliamentary debate on Afghanistan were encouraging, yet it remains to be seen whether the leadership will now have the courage to raise some of the most important issues or if they will simply avoid mentioning them again. Many of the people who supported Corbyn’s anti-imperialist, pro-peace approach are still active in the Labour Party at all levels; some are even on Starmer's front bench. They continue to defend what they see as the gains of the Corbyn era and will press Starmer on his pledge to be ‘a force for peace and justice’.

Throughout its history, Labour always experienced tensions between its trade union affiliates and left-wing, anti-military activists. The Attlee Government introduced nuclear weapons, which were maintained and updated under the governments of Wilson, Callaghan, Blair and Brown. Corbyn had an uncomfortable keep but never use compromise with the trade unions and the parliamentary party over Trident. The overwhelming majority of Labour MPs voted to support the manifestos on which they were elected in 2015 and 2017 and to maintain four Trident submarines and a continuous at sea deterrent. The party should retain that policy alongside supporting further international negotiations for strategic arms control and disarmament and renewed efforts to strengthen and uphold the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Diaspora communities have come to have a big influence on Labour’s politics at local and parliamentary levels. As a result, some issues have become very divisive internally. One of

the most difficult is the dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, which is not a new problem for Labour. Keir Starmer initially attempted to move away from the simplistic anti-Modi positioning of Corbyn, but he had a hostile reaction from British Pakistani activists. Fearing defeat in the Batley by-election, a dog whistle Labour leaflet with a photograph of Johnson and Modi was distributed. It may have helped there, but it will now cause serious problems for Labour candidates when it is reproduced by the Conservatives in areas of the country where there are significant diaspora Hindu and Sikh communities. In my view, it is unwise for a potential party of government to allow the need to win the votes of minority diaspora local communities to shape its national position on complex foreign policy issues.

Under Corbyn and his Shadow Foreign Secretary, Emily Thornberry, the Labour front bench was silent on the crimes of Assad in Syria and the malign role of Iran, yet outspoken against the governments of Saudi Arabia and Israel. These positions were very popular with some left-wing activists, and Saudi diplomats were even banned from attending the party conference. Will that continue? Corbyn had referred to Hamas and Hezbollah as his friends. Labour under Starmer has already voted for a complete ban on Hezbollah in the UK, but there are no signs yet that it will similarly distance itself from the homophobic terrorists of Hamas. Several Labour MPs, including members of Starmer's front bench, have appeared on platforms alongside prominent Hamas supporters and boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) activists in recent months.

The Corbyn leadership even had Palestinian flags distributed and waved in the party's conference hall during the international debate in 2018. Although she has been a leading figure in the Palestine Solidarity campaign and called for a boycott of goods from West Bank settlements, Lisa Nandy said she is opposed to the call for BDS against Israel itself. Moreover, Corbyn never visited Israel. Following the change of government in the country and the signing of the Abraham accords in which several Arab countries, including the UAE, Bahrain and Morocco, now recognise Israel and have established diplomatic relations, there is a new diplomatic momentum in the region. Labour has a longstanding policy of support for a negotiated two-state solution of a viable Palestinian state alongside a secure and internationally recognised Israel. It has recently reaffirmed that it 'remains committed to formally recognising The State of Palestine'. The Labour leadership should now also work to improve relations with Israel with an early post-Covid lockdown visit by Keir Starmer.

Furthermore, what attitude will Labour take to the recent events in Tunisia, the ongoing civil war in Libya and to the repressive policies of the governments of Egypt and Turkey? Following the US and UK withdrawal from Afghanistan, does the party support a continuing UK presence in democratic Iraq? Does it support the UK bases in the Gulf, including in Bahrain? What is the current Labour view of Iran? There is no sign yet that the party has moved away from Corbyn's one-sided approach to the conflict in Yemen. It has maintained a policy of opposition to all arms sales to Saudi Arabia, but its policy statements do not condemn the Houthis and their Iranian backers. Similarly, Labour official policy is silent on its attitude to sanctions on Iran or other measures following the continuing Iranian breach of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and JCPOA.

The post-COVID economic crisis may lead to demands for a reduction in military spending. Labour has said it will restore the aid budget to 0.7% of national income, but will it also remain committed to the 2% NATO target?

Since he became leader, Starmer has said almost nothing about Brexit (apart from mistakenly supporting Johnson's terrible Withdrawal Agreement deal). However, the crisis in Northern Ireland and the economic impact of long Brexit is not something Labour can ignore. The party should support closer economic relations for all of the UK with the European Single Market, which might in time lead to a formal relationship like Switzerland or Norway have with it. It should say loudly and clearly that it will have very close foreign policy, defence and security cooperation with the EU via links to Permanent Structured Co-operation (PESCO) and closer bilateral defence arrangements with France, the Netherlands and others. It was easy for Labour under Corbyn to take an anti-Trump position on foreign policy, but the Biden presidency will pose more difficult challenges for both government and opposition. The US will place demands on its partners as it seeks to reshape its own military and political alliances for the coming decades to combat the rise of an assertive China. How will Starmer and his team position Labour on these future debates?

It is an all too safe approach to have a foreign policy that is based on generalised platitudes and aspirations for democracy and human rights, or an empty slogan like the Tories' 'Global Britain'. Nevertheless, it is a very different thing to be in government and navigate diplomatic relations and make hard choices with 195 countries; indeed, many of them are not democracies, do not share our values and may have internally repressive policies which we strongly disagree with. Outside of the EU, the UK will need significant allies and partners as it faces these challenges.

The Corbyn era was the low point of Labour foreign and defence policy. However, I have been encouraged by what Keir Starmer, Lisa Nandy and others have said and done on certain issues so far. Still, there is a very long way to go to return Labour to having a progressive, patriotic foreign and defence policy, which will restore the trust and confidence of the British people.

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## Chapter 16: How we pay for our increased spending can tell a story about the country we will create

by Jonathan Todd

Regaining economic credibility was totemic to the 2013 Labour Uncut manifesto and winning back trust on public spending was believed to be at the heart of this credibility. Plus ça change. ‘It’s hard to trust Labour given that the pandemic will have to be paid back for some time,’ a voter from Don Valley told a focus group convened by Renaissance – a new Labour grouping led by centrist MPs. Additionally, a headline reporting Renaissance’s launch read, ‘Voters still unlikely to trust Labour with spending’.<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, some things have changed since 2013. Then, YouGov polling found that a consistent majority considered the government’s cuts to be necessary – a support rating that never went below the mid-50s in the nearly three years between the beginning of that poll tracker in early 2011 and our manifesto in late 2013. Now, YouGov ask, ‘If measures are needed to be put in place to reduce the deficit, which of the following best fits your view?’<sup>31</sup> In this respect, 47% of all voters indicate ‘The deficit should mainly be reduced by putting up taxes, not reducing public spending’. This is significantly more than the 29% that responded that ‘The deficit should mainly be reduced by reducing public spending, not raising taxes’. This 47% rises to 59% among Labour voters, while only falling slightly to 46% among their Conservative counterparts. In 2013, the public thought that the burden upon the public finances created by the financial crisis should be borne by cuts. In 2021, the view is that taxation should fill any holes in the public finances left by the pandemic.

The reduced public appetite for cuts changes the political context but does not eliminate the challenges facing Labour for a number of reasons. First, the party – in the form of local government – does not escape the blame for past cuts. One voter in their 50s, who was part of the focus group organised by Renaissance, said local government ‘get the money from London to put in what they need, and they aren’t doing the job.’ Central government being blamed for cuts now has a greater association with David Cameron’s administration than Boris Johnson’s, which represents a change of perspective for many voters. ‘I have always voted Labour,’ continued the focus group participant, ‘and now gone over to Conservative.’

Second, while decisions surrounding what to tax tend to be less painful for Labour politicians than what to cut, tax decisions are politically perilous. Third, although public sentiment has shifted in favour of tax and away from cuts, a Labour fiscal strategy devoid of spending efficiencies carries the risk of the party seeming profligate. It is important that Labour identify government spending that would disappear under Labour. One example of this is the £200 million that is due to be spent on a royal yacht. Indeed, there are plenty of other instances of the government squandering public money:

- **Test and Trace:** described by Nick Macpherson, who used to be the most-senior civil servant at the Treasury, as the ‘most wasteful and inept public spending programme of all time’.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *The Guardian*, 14 July 2021.

<sup>31</sup> YouGov/*The Times* Survey: 23/24 June 2021.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in *The Observer*, 14 March 2021.

- **Personal protective equipment (PPE):** suppliers with political connections were directed to a ‘high-priority’ channel for UK government contracts where bids were 10 times more likely to be successful, according to a report by the National Audit Office.<sup>33</sup>
- **Downing Street:** ‘With £2.6 million spent on this briefing room,’ argue the Taxpayers Alliance, ‘Downing Street will have a hard time justifying this to taxpayers’.<sup>34</sup>

The more waste, incompetence and sleaze that can be hung around the neck of the government, the more likely it is that Labour will get a fair hearing for our plans.

The government’s war on woke will try to drown us out. It hopes people living in the areas around the so-called Red Wall will not believe that Labour can make them better off economically, because they do not believe that the party shares their cultural values. ‘Culture versus Economics’ was a chapter in a book published by the Financial Times journalist, Martin Sandbu, last year. It weighs in on cultural explanations for the political earthquakes of 2016 (Brexit and President Trump) against economic reasoning. ‘The political divisions we are experiencing in the West today are the product of the end of economic belonging,’ argues Sandbu. ‘We can disarm the current assault on liberal principles, democratic institutions, and international openness by restoring an economy of belonging.’

This argument mirrors the central strategy of the Biden presidency: an economy that works for all Americans will be more attractive than ceaseless culture wars with a Trumpist Republican party. Biden is using tax to build this economy, including the generation of \$1.5 trillion over the next decade via higher taxes on the top 1%. This has been proposed alongside the American Families Plan, which invests ‘in the foundations of middle-class prosperity: education, healthcare and childcare’ (similar focuses to our chapters on families by Kevin Meagher, housing by James Wright and care by Joanne Harding), and it is part of ‘a tax reform agenda that rewards work – not wealth’.<sup>35</sup>

In a chapter titled ‘A Tax Policy for the Left Behind’, Sandbu argues for three reforms – the first of which parallels Biden’s wealth tax:

First, to tax all wealth directly; second, to do much more to stop the evasion and avoidance of taxes on capital; and third, to tax activities that have bad side effects on society – above all, environmental pollution – but in ways that benefit rather than hurt the left behind.

Developing a set of tax proposals that aligns with these three reforms should be at the core of how Labour pays for the public spending advocated in this manifesto. This is how it could be done:

- **Wealth Tax:** with a foreword from Lord Gus O’Donnell (GOD) and authorship from eminent luminaries, the Wealth Tax Commission reported the following last year: ‘A wealth tax starting above £2 million at a rate of 0.6% can raise £10 billion after ongoing administrative costs’.<sup>36</sup>
- **Corporation tax:** a global minimum corporation tax was this year agreed at 15% by 130 countries. A Labour government should push to raise this floor to 21% in line with

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<sup>33</sup> National Audit Office, Investigation into government procurement during the Covid-19 pandemic, 26 November 2020

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in *Evening Standard*, 21 April 2021

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/american-families-plan/>

<sup>36</sup> Wealth Tax Commission, Final Report, December 2020

the original proposal from the Biden administration. If set at this level, it would raise £13.7 billion for the UK Exchequer.<sup>37</sup> This would effectively capture some of the 40% of global profits that multinationals are shifting to tax havens annually.<sup>38</sup>

- **Carbon tax:** according to a new report by the thinktank, Bright Blue, ‘The current carbon pricing system across different economic sectors in the UK is inconsistent, regressive, unclear, and cannot put the country on the path to reach net zero emissions by 2050’. This report provides a suite of sensible recommendations, which Labour should consider. ‘Based on a £75/tCO<sub>2</sub>e price applied across the economy, uniform carbon taxation could raise as much as £27bn a year by 2030... Offsetting the impact for the lowest five income deciles would cost around £7.4bn a year, around 30% of the total raised’.<sup>39</sup> Carbon pricing is an essential tool in the monumental challenge of achieving net zero – with offsets helping to win political support for a transition that is economically redistributive and industrially regenerative.

These taxes are about more than paying for this manifesto’s spending. They craft a Labour society that rewards work, not wealth; backs businesses that pay their taxes in this country, not those that do not and supports a just transition to a zero-carbon future. They contrast with the Tories as the Chancellor is opposed to a wealth tax<sup>40</sup> and the government refused to support Biden wanting to go to 21% on corporation tax; the Bright Blue proposals want to move on from our failing status quo. They also dovetail with other chapters in this manifesto in terms of making politics about questions of economic efficiency and distributional justice rather than the culture wars discussed in Rob Marchant’s chapter. Furthermore, they complement the responsible internationalism that Mike Gapes argues for in the sense that wealth taxes and corporation tax floors will work most effectively alongside international efforts to curb tax havens, while adequate carbon pricing is needed across the globe.

If it was simply about paying for this manifesto’s spending, the government could easily borrow. Despite Rishi Sunak’s needless bluster about ‘balancing the books’, there is no pressure on government borrowing. Interest on government debt as a share of government revenues is at a 320-year low.<sup>41</sup> This country needs a mature conversation about how this low cost of government debt can be used to quicken the pace of our economic growth, our transition to a zero-carbon economy and our delivery of the kind of economy of belonging that Sandbu advocates and Biden is trying to build. Nevertheless, the political space for this conversation is limited.

Keir Starmer’s proposals for a British recovery bond<sup>42</sup> may allow this space to expand. It brings government debt out of international finance and into our living rooms, reconnecting our savings with the growth of British industry. As the zero-carbon transition heightens government capacity to make and shape markets, this new financial product can successfully align with the pump priming of industry by government. For example, government regulation

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<sup>37</sup> This figure comes from the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), *Ending the Race to the Bottom*, June 2021.

<sup>38</sup> This figure is reported in Sandbu’s book.

<sup>39</sup> Josh Buckland for Bright Blue, *Green Money: A Plan to Reform UK Carbon Pricing*, July 2021.

<sup>40</sup> In July 2020, the report of the Wealth Tax Commission quotes Rishi Sunak as saying, ‘No, I do not believe that now is the time, or ever would be the time, for a wealth tax.’

<sup>41</sup> See analysis by the Institute of Fiscal Studies: <https://ifs.org.uk/uploads/Presentations/Covid-19-Deficits-debt-and-fiscal-strategy.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> See speech by Keir Starmer on 18 February 2021.

shapes the market for heat pumps as replacements for central heating boilers, while finance from the British recovery bond could lower the cost of heat pumps, speed the growth of this market and increase the potential for British industry to win exports of this product.

In conclusion, we propose a five-point plan for raising £30 billion to finance this manifesto's spending, which is as follows:

1. Wealth tax: £10 billion through a modest tax of 0.6% on wealth over £2 million;
2. Corporation tax: £10 billion by raising corporation tax to 21% alongside working with the Biden administration to establish this as a global floor on corporation tax;<sup>43</sup>
3. Carbon tax: £5 billion in the early years of a Labour government – with offsets to ensure the least well-off are compensated;<sup>44</sup>
4. A new emphasis on best value in public procurement that incorporates an end to Tory waste and incompetence to save £4 billion annually;
5. British recovery bond: £1 billion through one million savers backing Britain's future with investments of £1000.

By undertaking these measures, we can make Labour's sums add up and tell a story about a new Britain that only our party is capable of communicating.

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<sup>43</sup> This is less than the £13.7 billion that the IPPR estimates the UK would raise through a global floor on corporation tax of 21% and assumes that tax collection is less efficient in the absence of this global floor.

<sup>44</sup> The imposition of this tax will require careful political judgment. 'There are,' according to the Bright Blue publication referenced earlier, 'examples of where carbon pricing has proved politically acceptable... Key to these measures has been a sense that they target a clear, unarguable environmental harm and that there are green alternatives that are accessible.' Labour should forensically identify such a tax; while doing so will not be without its challenges, it is important that Labour demonstrates that we are more committed to a green transition than the Conservative government.

**Labour's Reset - The Path Back to Power** sets out what's needed to win the next election. Drawing together contributions from elected representatives, former senior Labour officials and expert commentators, it looks at the barriers to backing Labour, what the Party can do in opposition to break these down and the type of policy platform that will attract the voters needed to put Keir Starmer in Downing Street

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