

CAMPAIGN BRIEFING

CLPD CAMPAIGN for LABOUR PARTY DEMOCRACY

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The CLPD publication for CLPs and Labour Party members. For detailed and exclusive NEC and NPF reports, internal Labour Party news and debates visit www.clpd.org.uk (where this newsletter can be downloaded), www.facebook.com/clpd.labour, or X: @CLPD_Labour.

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Celebrating Over 50 Years of CLPD

Labour must change direction or face disaster

Diane Abbott condemns Labour's current policy direction.

The crises we must address

We are facing four grave and inter-related crises: war and the threat of war, austerity, racism, and climate change. They affect the whole of society, but they affect the working class and Black people the most. Yet although the immediate perspective looks bleak, there are still grounds for optimism. As political attacks continue on all fronts, so the resistance to them will grow. We know this from history.

So our task is to stick to our principles. We must not get deflected by rigged claims of unpopularity. We need to explain how these crises are linked, and why ordinary people are suffering while arms manufacturers, energy companies, landlords, and speculators are doing just fine. And the role of CLPD, as part of the left organising within the Labour Party, has never been more important.

War is not the answer

The most immediate threat is war. For purely selfish reasons of his own and what he calls the threat from China, Trump wants out of Ukraine. Yet there is a sense of crisis and chaos in European capitals, including London, because of the possibility of peace in Ukraine. It is clear that the Anglo-French policy is to continue the war. But they demand



that Trump gives them what he refuses to: a security guarantee. He won't, precisely because that continues the war, with a huge financial cost.

So, the Starmer/Macron Plan A is a complete non-starter. And it is not clear that there is a Plan B. This is posturing, play-acting as strategy. Yet there has been wild talk of boots on the ground to fight Russia, even though it's a nuclear power. How anyone expects to defeat Russia without US help, when they couldn't do so with it, remains a mystery.

European leaders are all agreed on the need for much higher military spending, Starmer amongst them (see p22). At a time of general budget constraints in Germany, pension cuts in France, and austerity in Britain, it is clear that increasing the military budget can only be achieved by cuts elsewhere. Playing games with fiscal rules still means that military budgets will rise, other budgets will be cut, and we will all have to pay interest on new debt whose sole benefit is to make arms manufacturers rich.

Military spending means cuts elsewhere

One of the first casualties of this war drive has already been the poor in other countries, with cuts to the international aid budget. This is disgraceful. It is the opposite of Labour values, and was too much for Anne-liese Dodds, who resigned as Inter-

national Development Minister.

The next target is the welfare budget. Ministers have been busy briefing that the welfare budget is too high and that there are too many people claiming sickness benefits. This was even before the latest developments on Ukraine or the election of Trump. But now they have an excuse to do what was long-intended. A government which has already implemented one austerity Budget is now preparing to slash welfare payments too, as shown by March's Spring Statement.

We now know that the cuts in welfare will largely fall on the disabled. Nobody who voted for Starmer in last year's General Election could ever have guessed he would cut welfare and public sector spending to spend money on warfare.

"Arms manufacturers, energy companies, landlords, and speculators are doing fine"

And it's a myth that military spending will boost GDP or provide good jobs. The government's own figures for its impact on employment show military spending is technologically advanced, equipment-heavy, and creates very few manufacturing jobs. It's something which no-one benefits from.

Cuts to welfare spending to fund increased military spending are morally indefensible as well as electorally ruinous for the Labour party. And Black people will once again bear the brunt of austerity. If we want to create jobs, we should nationalise UK steel, water, and rail – and invest heavily. And we should end the staff shortages in education and the NHS too.

(cont. on p2)

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(Diane Abbott cont. from previous page)

Racist immigration, policing, and climate policies

The crisis of increasing racism is also adversely affecting immigration policy and policing. For instance, Baroness Casey's recent review exposed the Met, Britain's largest police force, as institutionally racist, misogynist, and homophobic. And if anyone dares to complain, or revolt, an increasingly authoritarian government clamps down on them hard.

There were already stupid and unworkable campaigns on 'stopping the boats', which even Rishi Sunak admits was a stupid slogan. Worse than that, it's racist. It demonises all asylum-seekers and all migrants. We have crass and racist publicity campaigns on deportations, while our asylum policy is already subordinate to foreign policy priorities. Ukrainians and Hong Kongers can all come here, but not Afghans or Iraqis. Meanwhile, cutting the aid budget will only increase asylum applicants, and the government will respond even more harshly to them.

The issues of racism and climate change are clearly linked. Rich countries like the US, Australia, and Canada have per capita CO₂ emissions massively higher than the global average while India and countries in Africa and the Caribbean have far lower than the per capita average. Yet they are told they are not doing enough to cut emissions. You can see the double standard.

We cannot go forward on Starmerite policies. We've come through a difficult time but even on the right people are becoming sceptical of Starmer. There is an alternative and we must continue to fight for it. We need to come together, we need to organise, we need to mobilise.

Diane Abbott is MP for Hackney North and Stoke Newington. Follow Diane on X: @HackneyAbbott

"Quote Unquote"

"£500m: Reduction in financial support for carers.
£184bn: Estimated value of unpaid care carried out annually by UK's carers."

Private Eye, Apr '25

The Scottish Parliament elections



Katy Clark believes Scottish Labour must be bold to demonstrate we can deliver what people need from Holyrood.

It's time to challenge the SNP's dominance

The SNP have been in power in Holyrood since 2007 and has proved hard for Scottish Labour to dislodge, despite the Scottish Government's poor record on competence and delivery. After 18 years, Scotland needs change and a government that will deliver.

Political commentators have noted growing dissatisfaction with the SNP and cracks in its long-standing dominance. Yet polling currently places Labour behind the SNP in Holyrood voting intentions and it's generally accepted that Scottish Labour has been hit by UK policies like cutting winter fuel payments and disability benefits. The new UK Government may have increased funding to the Scottish Government by more than £9bn, and the Employment Rights Bill will have a positive impact in Scotland, but this isn't cutting through to the voters suffering from continuing increases in the cost of living.

With Scottish Parliament elections in May 2026, Scottish Labour must use the remaining months to set out a positive alternative of a government in waiting which will deliver real change for the people of Scotland.

It's a tactical arena

Since 2014, the main factor driving votes in all elections, apart from last year's General Election (GE), has been the constitutional issue of independence, which continues to divide and polarise voters. The SNP managed to largely convert the 'Yes' vote in the 2014 independence referendum into a vote for them at the 2015 GE, and to a large part that vote has stayed with them over the last decade.

Scottish Labour took third place in 2021, but there's now more tactical voting in Scotland, motivated by dissatisfaction with the Scottish Government and a desire to block the SNP – even among pro-independence voters. The emergence of Reform UK in Scotland has captured some anti-

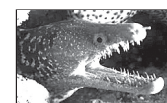
independence and protest votes, but has particularly hit the Scottish Conservatives, who now consistently poll behind Scottish Labour. We also performed better than polls indicated to win the Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse Scottish Parliamentary by-election, as well as in the recent council by-election for Barrhead, Lidoside, and Uplawmoor in my own MSP region.

"Scottish Labour needs to demonstrate it will stand up for people in Scotland with an industrial strategy to rebuild, and a vision to deliver social justice in all areas of policy"

Last year's GE was not fundamentally about independence but about who should be the next UK Government. And the Scottish Parliament elections must not be about the constitution, or indeed about UK Government policy, but have to be about what government the Scottish people need from Holyrood and who will deliver best for them. Scottish Labour needs to demonstrate it will stand up for people in Scotland with an industrial strategy to rebuild, and a vision to deliver social justice in all areas of policy.

Scottish Labour already diverges from UK Party policy on many areas. The whole point of devolution was to develop different policies and enable difference, and Scottish Labour will be holding a policy conference in Novem-

(cont. on opposite page)



Bitebacks

"The obscene and inhumane two child cap must go."

Angela Rayner MP, Twitter/X, Dec '20.



Photo: Scottish Parliament Building, Holyrood © Reinhold Möller

(Katy Clark cont. from previous page)

ber to discuss our policy and manifesto for next year.

We need to be bolder

To win in 2026, our platform has to be radically different from a stale SNP government. Whilst we must not raise taxes on the poorest working people who are already suffering, we should be ambitious about how we bolster the devolved Scottish economy through the power of the Parliament and support for green jobs and skills. We also need to look at how to ensure those with the broadest shoulders pay to improve public services. We also have to make the cake bigger, so the Scottish Government has the resources it needs, particularly given the demographic changes and increased demands we face in future years.

Scottish Labour must be the party to boost workers' rights: to raise

workers' wages, ban exploitative zero-hours contracts, implement stronger parental leave provisions, and ensure that going to work pays enough to live, not just to survive. We must also demonstrate we can deliver in critical areas like health, transport, education, housing, justice, and the economy. We must show we are on people's side.

We must exploit the SNP's political vulnerabilities and fragmentation. We must tackle the rise of the far right and the increase in popularity of Reform UK. We have to be far bolder than we have been in the past. To return a Scottish Labour Government in 2026, the party has to give voters hope about what the future can look like, and demonstrate that we will deliver policies to improve the lives of the people of Scotland.

Katy Clark is Labour MSP for West Scotland, and Shadow Minister for Community Safety in the Scottish Parliament.

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The continuing battle for employment rights

Jeff Slee outlines key features of the new Employment Rights Act and the commitments Labour still needs to address.

A good start

The Employment Rights Bill should become law this Autumn. It's a good step forward and will put into law some - but by no means all - of the commitments agreed between the Party leadership and our affiliated unions in 'Labour's New Deal for Working People' of May 2024. It will undo some of the anti-union legislation the Tories brought in between 2010-24, and give improved rights to workers, workplace representatives, and unions.

But will it really "transform ordinary working people's lives" as the New Deal document promised? This will depend on consultations to be held, and the regulations and secondary legislation to be introduced, following the passing of the Act. Full implementation of the Act will take two years, as the Government announced in July. And the Government should beware giving too much to employers who will be lobbying vigorously on these.

And it will depend on whether the government presses ahead with three key New Deal commitments which are not in the Act: single status of worker; sectoral collective bargaining; and reversing outsourcing. The Government should see the Act as the start of a process of improving workers' employment rights, not the end: we need

a second Employment Rights Bill to follow this.

Workers need more rights

For many workers, life got harder under the Tory government. Real wages were no higher in 2024 than before the financial crash of 2008. The changing nature of work has put many more workers in uncertain insecure employment, including zero-hours contracts with no guarantee of hours or income. And bad employers have used the weakness of employment rights to mistreat their staff. For example, in 2022, P&O got away with sacking 800 staff without notice and replacing them with cheaper foreign workers.

Another example is the GMB campaign to defend Amazon UK's 60,000 workers, who suffer gruelling conditions, unrealistic productivity targets, surveillance, and bogus self-employment.¹ And who are paid pennies above the minimum wage for this. During the pandemic, Amazon brazenly disregarded social distancing and hygiene rules. And Amazon used legal but dirty tactics at their Coventry warehouse to defeat the GMB's call

for recognition and the right to negotiate over pay and working conditions. On the eve of a planned ballot for recognition it hired 1,300 new workers who voted against it; it forced workers to attend hour-long anti-union seminars; and it bullied its union representatives.



Single status of worker

When the Bill becomes law, the 5m workers in the gig economy, 1m workers on zero-hour contracts, and the 900,000 agency workers, will still not have full employment rights, because they are not classed as "employees". According to the Labour Research Department (which is separate from the Labour Party): "There are many examples of sham self-employment, especially in sectors such as construction and in the gig economy, where rogue employers deliberately draft contract documentation to exclude or minimise employment rights."

The government must commit itself to bringing forward legislation soon, to create a 'single worker status' which gives full employment rights to every worker except the genuinely self-employed.

The New Deal agreement promised this. It said: "We will move towards a single status of worker and... consult in detail on a simpler framework that differentiates between workers and the genuinely self-employed."

The House of Commons Business and Trade Select Committee reported that "Status of worker does not feature in the Employment Rights Bill... if reforms to employment status are delayed, lawyers and unions have warned that businesses could sidestep the Employment Rights Bill by hiring staff as self-employed contractors, temps, or agency workers. This would mean those workers would not be entitled to the reforms laid out in the Bill." And "While the Committee

(cont. on opposite page)



(Jeff Slee cont. from previous page)

welcomes the Government's plans to reform worker status and bogus self-employment, it must proceed at pace to turn ambition into action."

But the government has been vague about how urgently it will deal with this. Unless the government legislates for single status, employers will still be able to get round employee rights in the Act, to keep control over hiring and firing and hours of work, cut wage costs, avoid employer National Insurance contributions, and to undercut their competitors.

Sectoral collective bargaining

Sectoral collective bargaining prevents employers undercutting their competitors by employing staff on lower wages and worse conditions. Unions and employers across a sector of the economy meet together to set minimum standards which are binding on all companies in that sector.

The New Deal promised that the Labour government will "start by establishing a Fair Pay Agreement in Adult Social Care, to drive up pay and conditions" and "also assess how and to what extent Fair Pay Agreements could benefit other sectors and tackle labour market challenges. Fair Pay Agreements will be negotiated through sectoral collective bargaining... [and] would cover a wide

range of issues including... pay and pensions, working time and holidays, training, work organisation, diversity and inclusion, health and safety, and the deployment of new technologies."

It's to be welcomed that the Act does introduce Negotiating Bodies including employers and unions for adult social care staff and for school support staff. But it's disappointing that neither of these are really sectoral collective bargaining. In its briefing on the Bill, The Institute of Employment Rights said: "What the Bill is proposing is a form of pay determination, but not pay determination by collective bargaining as that is normally understood."

The government must turn the Negotiating Bodies into genuine collective bargaining forums. And then extend sectoral collective bargaining to other sectors of the economy.

Outsourcing vs insourcing

The New Deal said that: "Labour will end the presumption in favour of outsourcing and oversee the biggest wave of insourcing of public services for a generation".

Public sector workers whose work has been outsourced can now be protected from worsening pay and conditions, subject to ministers imposing regulations to do so. But we've yet to see any move towards insourcing, the return to the pub-

lic sector of work which has already been outsourced.

Tougher legislation is needed

There are also parts of the Act which remain open to abuse. For example, while the Act gives unions the Right of Access to workplaces, employers will be able to delay and frustrate this right, and to prevent access altogether by paying a fine – which the Act does not specify.

We must campaign for further improvements to employment rights, and support the Labour MPs and trade unions who have called for a second Employment Rights Bill to be introduced soon to legislate for at least those areas of the New Deal for Working People which have not been included in the current Employment Rights Bill.

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

More information, analysis, and comment on the Act can be found from the Institute of Economic Rights and the Campaign for Trade Union Freedom, and from publications by the Labour Research Department.

1 Further information on the GMB campaign can be found at www.gmb.org.uk/amazon.

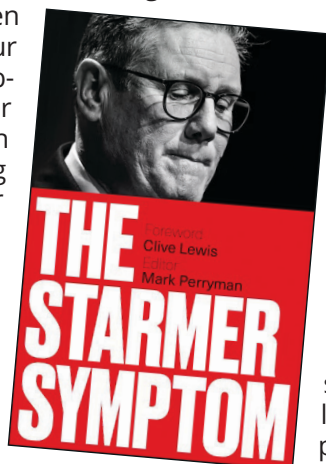
Book review

The Starmer Symptom

Bryn Griffiths reviews Mark Perryman's collation of 18 important perspectives on Labour's malaise under Starmer.

Keir Starmer has broken all ten of his pledges to the Labour Party membership, is probably the most factional Leader we've ever had, and with each month that passes his polling seems to get worse (Labour is dipping below 20% as I write).

Perryman is famed for his Lewes Labour Party political education events which attract speakers from across Labour's broad church, including the oft-silenced left.



On this occasion he has pulled together a stellar list of eighteen political writers, many of them former guests of the CLP, to cast their eye

over the sickly patient of Starmer's leadership. It's fair to say that the symptoms they identify are cause for considerable concern.

Writers include Clive Lewis MP setting the scene; Paula Surridge dissecting the electoral landscape; geographer Danny Dorling

surveying an unequal Britain; James Meadway describing the dismal economics of Starmerism; and Emma Burnell's examination of 'Labour according to Morgan McSweeney'.

Mark Perryman has kicked off an essential and urgent debate. Faced with impending disaster we need to understand why it's going so badly wrong, and how we can avoid electoral doom.

Bryn Griffiths is a member of Colchester CLP and the CLPD Executive.

Mark Perryman appears on the Labour Left Podcast in October. He is available for Constituency Labour Party events based on his keynote essay in the collection 'Testing the Limits of Labourism', with 50% of his book sales on the day going to the CLP. He can be contacted at Mark@PerrymanEmails.net.

Palestine: What route to peace and justice?



Hugh Lanning calls on the Labour Government to end support for Israel's colonial crimes.

It's time for Labour to act

In May, David Lammy finally appeared to have harsher words for Israel, but arms sales continued in ever-increasing volumes due to the failure to ban the continuing supply of F-35 fighter jet parts to Israel from the global supply pool. As Israel deliberately starves Gaza, many party members and affiliates have recognised that it has taken 18 months for Labour to even start raising what are, globally, mainstream criticisms.

If justice for Palestine is to be a reality, the UK Government needs to recognise that Israel has never accepted there should be a state of Palestine. They are not looking for a solution based on a division of land, they are determined to have control of it all. The objective is the elimination of the majority of Palestinians – if not all of them – from what remains of their land. The strategy is now transparent for even the most blinkered to see: it's the mass ethnic cleansing of Palestinians through forced population transfer.

When the next general election comes, Palestine and how Labour behaves over the coming months will be the litmus test for millions of voters, many of whose votes it has already lost. There is an opportunity now for Labour to win back some of the trust it's lost, but neither time nor Israel is on its side.

History will not absolve us

The rules of Israel's game plan have become clearer and louder for those who care to watch and listen. If 50,000 deaths are not enough to make it clear, an analysis of Israel's tactics and war objectives of should remove all doubt.

Prior to the latest military offensive to occupy the whole of Gaza, Israel had systematically expanded their 'spatial control': it blocked and divided Gaza into parts, expanded buffer and border zones, and built military pathways and structures. Not content with this, it destroyed all

agricultural land, attacked or contaminated water resources, and destroyed most of the medical services – targeting, laying siege to, and invading hospitals. This was coupled with the destruction of civilian buildings – not just health facilities, but shelters, utilities, schools and universities, government and religious buildings, and cultural sites. Finally, if that wasn't enough, prior to the total blockade, they targeted food aid – bakeries, trucks, markets, aid personnel, and warehouses.

"Israel has never accepted there should be a state of Palestine"

Israel's actions are causing cracks in the dam of the pro-Israel establishment and there is an unprecedented mass movement in this country in support of Palestine. Nor is it credible that Labour waited for so long to call for a ceasefire: this Government had all the evidence, it knew what Israel was doing, and it then collaborated with it. History will not absolve our government or its failure to act.

A solution based on equality

History has proved that military might is not enough to defeat a people and this is resistance which Israel can never defeat. Labour needs to listen and understand this. To do so, we must try to stand in Palestinian shoes, not just Israeli ones, and see the world through their eyes.

A recent commission report of leading Palestinian figures identified 'differential rights' as an immovable obstacle to any just 'peace'. Differential rights almost sounds like just a technical description, but it's fundamental to understanding where Israel is coming from. The West needs to comprehend, as Palestinians certainly do from 70 years of racial rule, that Israel is not interested in any form of peace that does not give them not just 'security' but superiority over all other peoples in the land of historic Palestine or, as it prefers to call it, 'greater Israel'.

Western solutions to 'the question of Pal-

estine' don't start from the premise of equality of all the peoples living in historic Palestine. As a consequence, any solution will always be still-born. For a lasting and just solution, it will be necessary for the newly-formed coalition for a two-state peace (the UK, France and Canada) to recognise that any alleged solution using previous assumptions about Israel's 'rights' and vetoes are not viable as a basis for a peace process. Those assumptions have collapsed under the weight of Israel's totalitarian regime.

To achieve a just peace there is a mountain to climb. Not just a permanent ceasefire, or the reconstruction of Gaza, but forcing Israel to accept the self-determination of the Palestinian people which entails the decolonising of the apartheid regime it has built. There is only one way this can be achieved, as South Africa demonstrated: by Government sanctions, by removing the life-line of military support, and by ending trade and the financial underwriting of Israel's settler colonial crimes.

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

"Quote Unquote"

"A poll conducted by Opinium has found strong majorities amongst the public in support of a full arms embargo and sanctions against Israel. Those questioned supported an arms trade ban by more than 4 to 1, including 72% of those who voted Labour in 2024. There are also clear majorities in favour of sanctions against Israeli government ministers and for Israel to be expelled from the United Nations, with only 16% of all respondents opposed to Israel's expulsion."

Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Jun '25



Labour is still our party

Mick Whelan reminds us why we should still support Labour.

Labour has got some things done

When I joined the railway (as a guard, back in the day, before I became a driver on freight and passenger trains) and when I joined the labour movement (because I've always been a union member) and when I joined the Labour Party, I never thought I would end up chairing meetings in Downing Street. Because we (and I don't just mean ASLEF, I mean all the trade unions affiliated to the Party) have had more engagement with government, and more opportunity to put across our points of view, in the last 12 months than we had in the previous 14 years.

The new Labour Government's first Bill last year was to renationalise the railway. It isn't perfect; it doesn't include the rolling stock companies. But they said they would do it and they did it. They also told us that, in the first 100 days, they would bring forward 'A New Deal for Workers'. And they did it. We haven't got everything we wanted



but this – and let there be no mistakes or misunderstandings about the Employment Rights Bill – is the biggest step-change for workers in this country in a generation (see also p4).

Let's not forget

That, colleagues and comrades, is why I'm a member of the Labour Party and why I always vote Labour. Before we rush to complain – and I have complained too – let's not forget how the Conservative Party treated us during 1979-97 and from 2010-24. Let's not forget, either, that Nigel Farage and his cronies in Reform voted against the Employment Rights Bill at every stage as it went through the House of Commons.

And let's not forget that the Labour Party was formed by the trade unions in 1900, originally as the Labour Representation Committee. ASLEF, the train drivers' union, affiliated in 1903. The trade unions continue to play an important part in shaping Labour Party policy, and it is this union link which helps ensure the Party



continues to represent the interests of working people.

Labour remains better than any alternative government

As one of my colleagues, Ross Chudasama, of our Northern Line North branch, told our annual conference in May, "We voted overwhelmingly to keep our political fund and to keep our influence in Parliament."

In our political system there is only room for two parties – one of the left and one of the right – and splits from the main parties never work. Comrades must stay in the party and fight for what you believe. Don't leave and walk out into the political wilderness. As Tony Venson, an ASLEF activist and Labour councillor on Nuneaton & Bedworth borough council, dryly observed in Durham, with a nod over his shoulder to President Lyndon B Johnson, "We have to be inside the tent pissing out, not outside the tent, pissing in."

Of course we want more. And we will argue for more. But we should also acknowledge that any Labour government is always better than any Tory government has treated us. And – heaven help us – than any Reform government would be.

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



ASLEF
the train drivers' union

CLPD's AGM: Key point summary

There is a growing disconnect between the Party and the real-world experience of the people we represent. We need to get a grip on what is going wrong and corrects it:

- Labour secured 587,000 fewer votes in the 2024 General Election (GE) than in 2019.
- Support for Labour also fell progressively throughout the 2024 campaign.¹
- Labour won because of the collapse of the Tory vote by more than 7m from 2019.
- The Tory collapse was due to the policies they pursued in government.
- If Labour pursues similar policies, we can expect our support to also collapse.
- Support for Labour has continued to fall since the 2024 GE and is now only around 25%.
- No other newly-elected British government has seen such a fall by so much and so quickly.
- Labour is now pursuing policies that will undermine its support and build support for the right.
- We must revisit our agenda on the economy, public services, welfare, equality, and international conflict resolution.
- Improving democracy, inclusivity, opening up discussions, and ending factional exclusions within the Party can only improve this agenda.
- Should we fail in government, a vicious reactionary alternative is building support to replace us.

¹ Politico's Poll of Polls documents a fall from 45% to 34%

It's time for a wealth tax



Richard Burgon calls for a wealth tax to help fund the change people are crying out for.

The country didn't vote for continuing hardship

When people voted for a Labour government last year, they were crying out for change. For over a decade, workers' wages have stagnated, public services have crumbled, and our social security system has been dismantled piece by piece. But instead of the bold action urgently needed, what we've seen are cuts to disability support, a partially-reversed cut to the Winter Fuel Allowance, and the continuation of the two child benefit cap.

Labour was elected on a pledge to develop a strategy to reduce child poverty, yet the two child benefit cap, the biggest driver of child poverty in the country today, remains in place. It has pushed 300,000 children into poverty, and a further 700,000 deeper into poverty, since it was introduced in 2017 (see *Campaign Briefing*, Edition 84).

The Government continues to claim these decisions are about closing a 'black hole' in the public finances. But no Labour government should ever try to 'balance the books' by forcing sick and disabled people into hardship or condemning children to hunger.

After a deeply unpopular first year in office, the Labour Government must change direction completely. If not, it will continue to lose support, with Labour's previous supporters staying at home or, as the polls show, mainly switching to other left-of-centre or centre-left parties. Such a collapse of Labour's voter coalition paves the way for a far-right government at the next election.

Trickle-down in reverse

The super-rich have seen their fortunes soar, while families across the country struggle to heat their homes and put food on the table. Since 2010, billionaire wealth in the UK has more than

doubled – from £250bn to over £620bn. And the gap is growing ever wider.

Research shows that more than half the UK's billionaires did not make their fortunes through productive work or job creation, but through rent extraction – property, inheritance, or financial speculation. Their growing wealth has little to do with building a more successful wider economy to raise the living standards for the majority of people. Instead, it has everything to do with a rigged system designed to funnel wealth to the top while everyone else is told to face the consequences of 'difficult choices'. Trickle-down economics hasn't just failed. It's operated in reverse.

This grotesque inequality blights our society, but it isn't an accident. It's the consequence of a broken system that rewards greed and hoards wealth at the top, one in which billionaires push their undue influence on our politics and on our democracy. And people can see what's happening.

Make the wealthiest pay their fair share

A modest annual wealth tax of just 2% on assets over £10m would raise an estimated £24bn a

year to improve ordinary people's living standards and rebuild our public services. It would affect less than 0.1% of the population. After years of campaigning for wealth taxes, I'm delighted to see this rising up the political agenda. Trade union leaders are increasingly calling for it, MPs are raising it in Parliament, and even

former Labour leader Neil Kinnock now backs it.

Of course, the billionaire-owned media try to discredit these proposals, but we've seen it all before. A barrage of headlines warned of a millionaire exodus if Labour scrapped

the non-dom status, and the Tax Justice Network reported an average 30 stories per day pushing that claim in 2024. But the truth? Just 0.3% of the UK's 3m millionaires left the country.¹ That's not an exodus, it's a rounding error. Meanwhile Patriotic Millionaires UK claims that 80% of millionaires support such a wealth tax.

"We're proud to pay and we're here to stay."

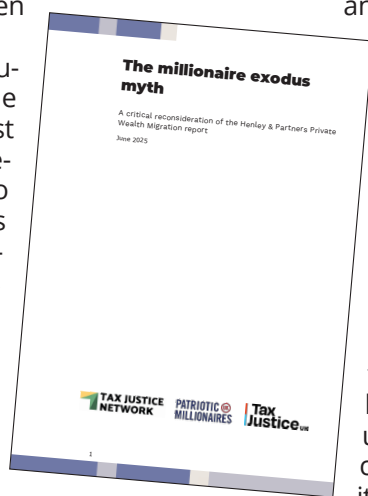
Julia Davies, British millionaire and impact investor

Wealth taxes are popular because they address the deep inequality in our society. A recent poll reported that three quarters of the population now back an annual wealth tax on assets over £10m. So, despite the continued fear-mongering of the rich and powerful, the public overwhelmingly supports making those with extreme wealth pay up.

Labour needs to be at the forefront of offering such progressive alternatives. That means learning the right lessons and breaking with the failed approach of the past year in government. If we don't, our support will continue to collapse and a Reform government is waiting in the wings. The threat that poses to our communities could not be more serious.

Richard Burgon is the Labour MP for Leeds East. Follow Richard on X: @RichardBurgon.

¹ *The millionaire exodus myth. A critical reconsideration of the Henley & Partners Private Wealth Migration report, June 2025.*



"Quote Unquote"

"We are constantly told: 'There's no money'. But there is plenty of money. It's just not in the hands of the government. The wealth of billionaires in the UK has risen by 1,000% since 1990. The richest 1% possess more wealth than the poorest 70%. Why do they have so much? Because the state does not; they have not been sufficiently taxed."

George Monbiot, Guardian, Jul '24

Voters punish Labour for continued austerity



Mike Phipps analyses May's local election results

The worst results for any new Prime Minister

"On every door it was the same story – winter fuel and PIP." These were the words of a Labour campaigner emerging from the count at the Runcorn and Helsby parliamentary by-election on 1st May, where Reform UK won one of Labour's safest seats – by just six votes.

It was the same story in local elections held on the same day. Reform took control of ten councils, the Liberal Democrats of three, and another ten are now under no overall control. The Tories lost all the 15 councils which they previously ran.

Reform won more seats than any other party – 676 out of some 1,650 – gaining representation on all 23 councils contested and winning 30% of the vote. The Liberal Democrats took 370 seats, a net gain of 163, winning majorities in three councils, with 17% of the vote overall.

Neither Labour nor the Conservatives won a majority on any council. Labour suffered a net loss of 187 seats, winning only 20% of the vote. But the Conservatives suffered the most: a net loss of 674 seats, with only 15% of the vote.

Labour suffered an almost complete wipe-out in some areas. It was the worst set of results for any new Prime Minister on record. The Party that ran Durham for over a century from 1919 now has only four county councillors left there. In Doncaster, Labour lost control of the council, shedding 28 seats, as Reform took power. Labour's Ros Jones survived as Doncaster Mayor, and launched a scathing broadside against the Leadership, highlighting again the unpopularity of winter fuel and disability benefit cuts.

The Greens made modest gains, up 44 seats, unseating councillors from the Tories, Labour, and the Liberal Democrats. In the mayoral contests, Labour gained the West of England, albeit with just 28% of the vote, but lost

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to the Tories. The new mayoralities of Greater Lincolnshire and Hull and East Yorkshire were both taken by Reform.

Victories for left Independents

There were some noteworthy victories for Independents of the left. Michael Lavalette was elected with 47% of the vote in Preston. Also in the North West, Maheen Kamran, an 18-year old medical student who was motivated to enter politics by the war in Gaza, defeated Labour to become a councillor for Burnley Central East. Meanwhile Azhar Ali, suspended by Labour for antisemitism last year during the Rochdale by-election, was elected as an Independent for the Nelson East ward.

Labour is wrong to appeal to Reform voters

Reform is a significant threat to Labour in some areas, the North East especially. But as Richard Burgon MP observed: "Polling shows Labour is bleeding at least as much support to its left as to its right."

Around three-quarters of Reform's support came from voters who haven't backed Labour in a General Election in 20 years. Burgon concluded: "Trying to win over these Reform voters with rightward lurches risks doing more harm than good by alienating core Labour supporters and making vote-splitting amongst progressive voters even more likely."

Labour must change course

Some Labour MPs drew the obvious conclusions. Brian Leishman MP tweeted: "Labour must change course. People voted for real change last July and an end to austerity." Former Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell MP agreed: "The message to ministers is: drop the plans to attack the disabled."

Nadia Whittome MP added: "Cutting disability benefits and scrapping the winter fuel allowance made voters

abandon us. The leadership needs to end its obsession with chasing the far-right on immigration."

South Shields MP Emma Lewell said: "It is tone deaf to keep repeating 'we will move further and faster on our plan for change'. What is needed is a change of plan." And in the week after the results, over 40 Labour MPs signed a letter to the Prime Minister warning that planned disability cuts are "impossible to support".

While the government continued to propose tough anti-migrant measures, apparently to placate voters, John McDonnell derided this approach: "The strategy dictated by Starmer's office appears to be that, to neutralise Reform, Labour has to position itself as close to Nigel Farage's party as possible." He concluded: "If Labour seeks to ape Reform, then voters will largely opt for the real deal and vote Reform, while at the same time Labour will alienate supporters who are aghast at the party adopting Reform-like positioning on immigration." (See also p2).

"If Labour continue to lose seats at this rate... there will be louder demands for a change of course"

The Party's Leadership may shrug off these results as the product of a difficult first ten months. But if Labour continue to lose seats at this rate in future by-elections and local elections over the next two years, there will be louder demands for a change of course – and not just from the left. Many centrist councillors, MPs, and ordinary members will, if only from the standpoint of self-preservation, want a new direction: witness former Cabinet member Louise Haigh's criticisms of the leadership in the aftermath of these elections. And if a change of line is not forthcoming, there will be growing demands for a new leadership too.

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

Mike is co-editor of Labour Hub, an online platform of Labour left debate; and his book 'Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow: The Labour Party after Jeremy Corbyn' (OR Books, 2022) can be ordered at www.orbooks.com/catalog/dont-stop-thinking-about-tomorrow.

RIP Labour Women's Conference?



Jean Crocker raises the alarm about women's influence within the Party.

Why no Women's Conference 2025?

There have been widespread criticisms about the 'postponement' of Annual Women's Conference (AWC) 2025. Most likely cancelled altogether, given elections in 2026 and money concerns.

Following the Supreme Court ruling that, in the wording of the Equality Act, sex means biological sex, May's National Executive Committee (NEC) was warned of possible discrimination claims and protests. But there's probably another reason: it is consistent with the constant downgrading of AWC since the vibrant, well-attended, and interactive conference at Telford in 2019, the last time that AWC was stand-alone, two days, and face-to-face.

A history of disempowerment

In 2020 there were online events but no real conferences because of the pandemic. In 2021 and 2022, AWC was stand-alone and two days, but remained online, while Labour Party Conferences were face-to-face, with all the usual fringes and socials. In 2023 and 2024 we had a face-to-face AWC, but back in its previous slot as a one-day prelude to the Labour Party Conference. And this year there is none. Will it return in 2026?

I was a CLP representative on the Women's Conference Arrangements Committee (Women's CAC) for the AWCs from 2018 to 2024, ie for the whole time that AWC returned to its roots as a policy-making conference. CLP representatives and other comrades on the Women's CAC fought intensively for democracy, diversity, accessibility, for CLPs to be able to put on fringe events with no fee, for networking, for visitor places to increase numbers and participation, and for a hybrid conference.

Preparing for AWC 2018, we argued hard and successfully for motions to be voted on (seriously, there

were arguments that there were not the resources for that), for a motion to go straight through to Labour Party Conference (increased to two later), and for diverse delegations. Each CLP could have two delegates, as long as at least one was from a less-represented group (BAME, LGBT+, or Disabled).

Leading up to the Telford AWC, we had to push hard for Disability Labour and myself to visit the venue. Their advice contributed to the 2019 success. Over time the barriers grew, but we always worked hard to ameliorate the consequences.

AWC is essential for women to thrive...

AWC was envisaged by the Democracy Review 2018 as part of a thriving Women's Organisation including regional Women's Committees, Women's Branches, and a National Women's Committee (NWC) to strengthen the voice of women in the Party. But the NWC has not had the resources or the number of meetings it needs, there is no longer guidance on the website on establishing a Women's Branch, or a dedicated National Women's Officer on the staff. Neither the NWC nor Women's CAC were consulted or even informed about the proposal to cancel the 2025 Conference.

Policy-making debates are the key opportunity for grassroots CLP and affiliate voices to be heard and to influence the direction of the Party. When we were reduced to one day, there was pressure to cut these from eight to four. We held firm on six, and showed how that could be done with time for both debates and speeches. But against our wishes, the time given to each debate was reduced, eventually to 20 minutes, in favour of more presentations from senior spokespeople.

...along with other Equalities groups

AWC was also intended to be one among several Equality Conferences. A Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic Conference, and a Disabled Members' Conference, have been in the

Rule Book since 2021 but have never been implemented (see p17 and p23). And last May's NEC decided not to go ahead with them either (as well as not proceeding with structures for LGBT+ members). AWC is the only Equality Conference that has made it into existence at all. Will it be revived? Could it be replaced by an event with no democratic content, as in the two decades before 2018?

There is support for a stand-alone AWC across the political spectrum, as was evident at the 2024 AWC. We need Women's and other Equality Conferences to be welcomed as an opportunity for members to be heard, to network, to bring forward new ideas, and to develop great enthusiasm to campaign for the policies to which they have contributed.

"CLP representatives and other comrades on Women's CAC fought intensively for democracy, diversity, accessibility, for CLPs to be able to put on fringe events with no fee, for networking, for visitor places to increase numbers and participation, and a hybrid conference"

Women's Branches and CLPs must act

- Send a motion to the NEC calling for the restoration of a democratic AWC: see www.clpd.org.uk/campaign/reinstate-labour-womens-conference.
- Send a motion to Labour Party Conference that relates to women. This one has to be about policy, not about restoring AWC, or it will be found out of order (see box on p11).
- Consider organising local or regional events: contact us at clpdwomen@gmail.com

Jean Crocker is a member of Gateshead Central and Whickham CLP and the CLPD Executive. She is a former Vice-Chair of the Women's Conference Arrangements Committee.

Vote for both Jean Crocker and Jack Ballingham in this year's ballot for Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC).

Requirements for a motion to Annual Labour Conference

- Must be on an issue that has not been substantially addressed in the National Policy Forum (NPF) Annual Report 2025. Note: the interpretation of 'substantially' will rest with the Conference Arrangements Committee.
- On one subject. We need advice from the Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC) on how it interprets this, but we recommend you keep the motion, and the actions it calls for, within one policy area.
- No more than 250 words in length. All words are counted except the title. Put any references and notes in the body of the motion. And check for slips like submitting two motions
- Not considered by the CAC as an organisational matter or constitu-

tional amendment. Focus on what Labour Party policy should be, eg on women's health. It's important to avoid motions, or parts of motions, on how the Labour Party is internally organised, eg on the restoration of Annual Women's Conference.

- The deadline for motions to Labour Party Conference is 5pm on Thursday 11th Sep '25.

There is an alternative



Matt Willgress outlines popular socialist economic alternatives to the capitalist crisis.

Unpopular policies are causing misery

As *Campaign Briefing* goes to press, there is growing opposition across society – and within Labour itself – to Keir Starmer's and Rachel Reeves' continued adherence to austerity policies. All the evidence shows these choices are causing great human suffering and are deeply unpopular. For example, when it came to disability benefit cuts, 59% of Labour members wanted Starmer to reverse the plans completely. Yet it's clear that Labour's leadership are ideologically committed to travelling further down the road of neo-liberalism, meaning misery for millions.

It's also clear the crises we face (including the cost-of-living emergency, the climate catastrophe, and militarisation) are deepening, and can't be resolved by tinkering around the edges.

Five key alternatives

In such a context, the left needs to put forward a totally different approach: a socialist economic strategy based on taking on the corporate profiteers head-on and ending austerity for good. Our agenda should include the following five building blocks:

- Expanding public ownership, to really take back control and plan a better future.
- Taxing wealth to help fund universal

public services, welfare, and social security, tackling poverty by making the rich pay (see p8).

- Investment not cuts: investment is the most important factor in growth, while cuts means more stagnation.
- A green revolution for the people and planet: a comprehensive plan to tackle climate change and social inequality by transforming the economy. Funded by hard cash, not just well-meaning words.
- Welfare not warfare: the £3 bn of additional nuclear military spending announced for the next two years must be restored to funding social needs (see p22).

Socialist solutions remain popular

In each of these areas, socialist solutions to the crisis not only already have great public support, but also have the

potential to become even more popular, as the Government stumbles from one crisis to another.

For example, polls show increasing public support for nationalisation: public ownership of energy is supported by 71% of voters, the Royal Mail by 75%, and water by 82%. And despite incessant establishment propaganda for more military spending, the YouGov question of "Would you support or oppose making cuts to other areas of public spending in order to fund an increase in defence spending?" saw 53% either "strongly" or "somewhat" opposed the idea.

Now is not the time to accommodate our demands to a non-existent centre ground, now is the time to boldly proclaim a socialist agenda. As James Connolly said, "For our demands most moderate are, we only want the earth!"

Matt Willgress is a member of Southgate and Wood Green CLP and the CLPD Executive. Matt is the National Organiser of 'Arise - a Festival of Left Ideas' and the Labour Assembly Against Austerity.

Conference 2025 fringe meeting We can tackle poverty and inequality

The case for universalism, the welfare state, and taxing the rich.

12:45, Sun 28th September in the Main Room (1st floor) at the Racquet Club Hotel, Hargreaves Buildings, 5 Chapel St, Liverpool L3 9AG.

Chaired by Ruth Hayes, Labour Women Leading & Unite EC; speakers include Ian Byrne MP; Neil Duncan-Jordan MP; Sarah Woolley, General Secretary BFAWU; Gawain Little, General Secretary, General Federation of Trade Unions; Simon Fletcher, political analyst, writer, and campaigner; Ellen Morrison, Disabled Members' Representative, Labour NEC

Hosted by Arise - a Festival of Left Ideas & the Labour Assembly Against Austerity.



Mexico: An inspirational example of democracy and sovereignty



David Raby lists the continuing radical achievements of Mexico's Movement for National Regeneration since 2018.

A peaceful transformation

You wouldn't know it from the media, but Mexico is now in the seventh year of a profound democratic transformation which has pioneered social justice, equality, economic development, and sovereignty.

The election in 2018 of Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) marked the end of decades of growing inequality, corruption and repression. AMLO identified corruption as the root of Mexico's problems and promised the 'Fourth Transformation' (4T) in the country's history: the first three (Independence from Spain in 1810-21, the liberal Reform of 1855-67 separating Church and State, and the 1910-21 Revolution) brought much progress but at the cost of violent conflict. The 4T is peaceful and democratic.

AMLO's philosophy of Mexican Humanism goes by the principle "For the good of all, first the poor": private investment is welcome, but the public interest must always come first. He promised "Civic Austerity": austerity for the rich, not the poor, and led by example, slashing his own presidential salary by more than 50% and calling for all high public officials to do the same. No more luxury hotels, expense-account lunches, or private jets: officials must travel economy class.

Public investment without debt and inflation

Many on the left were nonplussed by AMLO's pledge not to raise taxes, when tax levels are low in Mexico anyway; but he insisted that all must pay their taxes, with no exceptions or exemptions, and that big corporations and billionaires must pay. He greatly strengthened the Tax Collection Department of the Finance Ministry, and encouraged investigation and legal proceedings against corruption. The result has been a huge increase in revenue which has financed welfare programmes and public infrastructure investment.

By maintaining fiscal stability,

avoiding debt and inflation, the 4T governments have in practice won the support of many Mexican and foreign business interests, and the peso has actually appreciated slightly against the dollar. This has enabled them to restore national public control (in effect, partial nationalisation) of oil, gas, electricity, and lithium, with the national oil company PEMEX and the Federal Electricity Commission CFE (almost entirely privatised by corrupt neoliberal governments over the previous three decades) now serving the public interest. There has also been massive public investment in restoring rail passenger services, roads, airports, irrigation works and other enterprises, prioritising deprived areas.

A multitude of social reform programmes

AMLO and his Morena party (Movement for National Regeneration) had majorities in both houses of the Mexican Congress and in many of the country's 32 states. They set about creating a genuine welfare state for the first time, with universal old-age pensions, incapacity benefit, apprenticeships for young people, scholarships or grants for students from deprived backgrounds at all levels of public education, and a Mexican NHS with free universal healthcare. All of this for the first time ever.

Other programmes included Sembrando Vida (Sowing Life), a vast agroforestry scheme based on grants and technical assistance to small peasant farmers, which has provided assistance to 440,000 peasant families and reforested over 1m hectares. Other grants for small and medium farmers include free fertilisers, which have greatly improved agricultural self-sufficiency and reduced

rural poverty.

For the first time in decades the minimum wage has been increased every year, doubling in real value, and legislation has encouraged union democracy and equal pay. Indigenous and Afro-Mexican communities have had their languages and autonomy guaranteed in the Constitution, along with Justice Plans restoring their land and water rights. Women's rights and LGBT+ rights have advanced significantly, with gender equality at all levels of government. With the victory of Claudia Sheinbaum the country has a woman as President for the first time, but as she declares, "it's not just me as an individual, we women have all come to power!"

Public relations to counter right wing opposition

All of this faced tenacious opposition from the corrupt establishment led by the old ruling parties PRI and PAN, who allied against the transformation and have been ridiculed by Morena as the "PRIAN", a unified reactionary bloc. The success of AMLO and the 4T, and now of his presidential successor Claudia Sheinbaum, lies in effective implementation of popular reforms, strict adherence to their principles ("With the people, everything; without the people, nothing", and "No stealing, no lies, never betraying the people"), and constant communication.

One of the surprising aspects of the 4T governments has been their success in handling relations with their hegemonic neighbour. While criticising US policies under both Biden and Trump, and insisting on non-intervention and the protection of Mexican sovereignty, they have recognised the need to maintain good relations and negotiate with Washington on trade, migration, and security. In Trump's first term AMLO renegotiated the Trade Treaty with the US and



Canada with remarkable success, and now Claudia Sheinbaum has gained worldwide prestige with her firm but calm defence of Mexican sovereign interests in the face of Trump's threats on tariffs and possible intervention.

AMLO and Claudia have held daily two-hour press conferences (mañaneras) every day from Monday to Friday, attended by a wide range of mainstream and alternative media, where they and their ministers explain policy and patiently answer questions. They refuse to be provoked by the right who criticise them, tell lies, and insult them: they insist there will be no censorship, but they will exercise their right of reply. This has had a massive impact in discrediting media propaganda and, along with the effectiveness of government policies, explains why the far right has made no progress in Mexico.

The popular support for constitutional reforms

With their teams, AMLO and Claudia have also led by example in working a seven-day week: almost every weekend they tour this vast country supervising policies and projects and engaging in dialogue with local people. In the June 2024 General Elections Claudia won with nearly 60% of the vote, 30% more than her nearest rival, and Morena, with two small allied parties, won two-thirds super-majorities in both houses of Congress, essential for passing constitutional reforms.

The most important of many such measures was the judicial reform, establishing popular election (on a non-party basis) of judges at all levels: the elections in June 2025 were essential because the judiciary was the most

corrupt institution in the country, with judges from the Supreme Court down doing all they could to block AMLO's progressive laws, while also granting injunctions to protect violent cartel criminals.

Mexico's Fourth Transformation offers many lessons relevant to the UK and Europe, but is anyone paying attention?

David Raby is a member of Norwich South CLP, is a retired Professor of Latin American History (Universities of Toronto and Liverpool), and is co-ordinator of the UK Mexico Solidarity Forum.

He has just published 'Mexico In Transformation: From AMLO to Claudia' (Praxis Press, 2025) and can be reached at david.raby@mexicosolidarity.org.uk.

Keeping our policy promises

Andrew Fisher reminds us of the leadership's broken promises and why they matter.

Just imagine...

Imagine a Labour government that, instead of cutting disability benefits, hiked taxes on the top 5%. That instead of cutting winter fuel payments they just put up corporation tax by 1%.

Imagine where our polling might be if, instead of pulling back on the Green New Deal, or the £28bn Green Prosperity Plan as it was branded, we had delivered that investment in jobs, communities, and tackling climate change.

What about if, rather than pandering to Reform on migration with Powell-like rhetoric, we had built an immigration system based on compassion and dignity. Or reacted to the demand to 'take back control' by taking water, mail, and energy into public ownership – as supported by a majority of Reform and even Tory voters.

Imagine that, instead of defending and arming a genocide, a Labour government had put human rights at the centre of its foreign policy and stopped arms sales to human rights abusers like Israel and Saudi Arabia.



These were Starmer's pledges

The thing is, none of this should be a pipe dream, because everything I've asked you to imagine was part of the 10-point plan that Keir Starmer stood on to become Labour leader in 2020. If he had stuck to that vision, Labour would be in a much better position today in the polls and, more importantly, working class people would be better off and the economy growing faster as a result.

That same document said "public services should be in public hands", yet Wes Streeting has siphoned off more NHS funding into the pockets of private funders. Every penny that goes to building profit margins for corporations is money that is not spent on investing in the NHS and better public health.

Not only did Keir Starmer pledge more public ownership, but ahead of the 2024 General Election both Rachel Reeves and Angela Rayner promised "the biggest wave of insourcing for a generation". Too many workers are trapped in insecure contracts, low pay and with poor terms and conditions on government contracts. From cleaners to care workers, security guards to

catering staff, insourcing could save the taxpayer money, boost wages and improve services.

It's time to listen to our members

Labour's first year has been characterised by unnecessary missteps that have alienated pensioners, the WASPI women, and disabled people, and disappointed core voters. A party of democratic socialism should never be picking the pockets of the poorest. Equalising capital gains tax with income tax could raise enough to fully reverse the winter fuel payment cuts, cancel the proposed cuts to disability benefits, and scrap the two child benefit limit.

If a Labour government is going to succeed, it needs to listen to people like Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham when he calls for the "biggest and quickest" council house building programme Britain has ever seen, to London Mayor Sadiq Khan when he calls for rent controls, and to former Cabinet Minister Louise Haigh when she echoes the call of Richard Burgon for a wealth tax (see p8).

At Conference and afterwards, the Labour leadership needs to listen less to the corporate lobbyists, and more to its trade union affiliates and members.

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

We should be representing our working class voters



Jon Trickett MP reminds the Leadership why it must deliver for our Red Wall voters.

Labour is failing those in need

A long-time comrade of mine, a former miner who fought in the year-long strike, recently told me, "I didn't leave Labour. Labour left us." This sentiment is growing, especially in areas like mine in the UK's 'Red Wall'. Many of these voters are now shifting toward the Conservatives, abstaining, or turning to the right-wing Reform UK party.

This trend is not unique to Britain. Across liberal democracies, workers are moving away from centre-left parties, not because of cultural shifts, but due to decisions made by political leaders who've failed to address working class issues. Bernie Sanders summed it up: "A Democratic Party which has abandoned working class people will find that the working class has abandoned them."

A critical aspect of this shift lies in how workers' material conditions have deteriorated under successive governments. The Labour Party, once the voice of the working class, has increasingly become a technocratic force, managing an economic system that no longer benefits those it once represented. After being elected in 2024, the new Labour government made cuts to the winter fuel payment for pensioners to appease international financial markets, which led to



a collapse in polling support, particularly among older voters.

Before the election, Labour's response to a major strike wave in the UK further exemplified its distance from workers. Instead of supporting striking workers, Labour leader Keir Starmer advised MPs to avoid picket lines. Workers welcomed the few Labour MPs who joined them, but they were frustrated by the absence of the Party Leadership.

"To truly transform the material conditions of working people, Labour must reject the current economic system and pursue radical change"

The Labour Party, along with other social democratic parties, increasingly abandons redistributive policies, opting instead for neoliberal economic strategies. The result is a growing wealth gap: while the UK's billionaires have amassed almost £1tn, the country's poorest face rising poverty. Over four decades, productivity grew while wages stagnated, exacerbating inequality.

The promise of social mobility that was long used to justify inequality has been shown to be false. The class system is now more rigid, with poverty often persisting across generations. Meanwhile, access to housing has become more difficult, and health outcomes have worsened, particularly in working class areas.

A widening gap between voters and those who represent them

Despite this, recent polling reveals that many working class voters hold progressive views. They support public ownership of essential services, taxes on the wealthy, and more equitable access to education and jobs. However, these preferences are at odds with the policies pushed by the British establishment.

The gap between voters' desires and political leaders' actions is widening, reflected in the growing disillusionment with mainstream parties. People are questioning a system that seems increasingly controlled by a distant elite, rather than by those who represent their interests.

In Red Wall areas, material conditions have worsened. Poverty among children has risen, social care spending has fallen, and life expectancy has decreased. At the same time, the state's response to these challenges has been inadequate, with austerity measures exacerbating the problem.

The insurgent mood in the country is evident in the high rates of abstention at elections, the Brexit referendum, and the rise of parties like Reform UK.

Echoes of past mistakes

Labour's failure to meet the needs of working people echoes past mistakes. In 1929, a Labour government made cuts to appease fiscal orthodoxy, ignoring the needs of its base. Similarly, today's Labour government has embraced austerity, alienating core sections of its voters.

To truly transform the material conditions of working people, Labour must reject the current economic system and pursue radical change. It needs to understand the hardships faced by working people and take decisive action. An embryonic majority for transformation exists across the country, from the North to the South, and across various social groups.

The UK government must reject further austerity measures and address the real needs of its citizens. Democratic socialism is the only way forward, but the left in the UK must unite and make its voice heard once again.

Jon Trickett is Labour MP for Normanton and Hemsworth.



Bitebacks

"Inspired by Palestine Action, new direct action 'Yvette Cooper' takes action against BNY Mellon's investment firm, shareholders in Israel's biggest weapons producer."

Statement by 'Yvette Cooper (the new one)', Jun '25.

The Party cannot sideline its young members



Jack Ballingham describes how Young Labour is failing to engage and inspire young members and voters alike.

The democratic crisis in Young Labour

In 2024 the right-wing 'Labour to Win' faction's slate of candidates won control of both the Young Labour and Labour Students national committees for the first time after a long period of left majorities. Since then their democratic structures have withered on the vine, with the tacit endorsement of the Party's national leadership.

In January 2025, it was reported that the Labour Party's youth membership had plummeted to 30,000, down from a high of over 100,000 in 2020, and a far steeper fall than the membership more widely. This collapse has been paralleled in the electorate: in a May 2025 YouGov poll, Labour came third among voters aged 18-24, behind the Liberal Democrats and Greens.

How did we get to this point, and what can be done to resolve it?

Bureaucratic obstruction

When the left held a majority in Young Labour, it did so under a blockade by the leadership. In 2021 the then-chair of Young Labour, Jess Barnard (now a left NEC member), was bizarrely placed under investigation by the Party before receiving an apology. Young Labour's social media was shut down by the Party in 2022, and thereafter, the committee was only allowed to communicate through heavily restricted emails pre-approved by the Party. In 2023, an NEC rule change removed the voting rights of Youth Officers on CLP executives.

In that context, it was unsurprising that many members lost faith. In 2024, while the number of those voting for the left slate in Young Labour elections declined, the number of those supporting the right-wing slate merely remained stable through 2020, 2022 and 2024. In place of gaining more support from young activists, Labour

to Win's candidates had the enthusiastic backing of their colleagues on the NEC and in the leadership instead.

Ditching democracy

The actions of the current Young Labour leadership are accelerating the decline of youth membership and the confidence of young voters. They rarely, if ever, express political views, opting instead to prioritise canvassing sessions.

As an organisation, Young Labour is totally failing to offer any leadership on trans rights, the genocide in Gaza, or the crisis in higher education, all priority issues for young people. In place of encouraging popular enthusiasm among members, Young Labour has opted to ditch democracy. Young Labour's and Labour Students' annual conferences, required by the Party's Rule Book, have been discarded in favour of a joint event given the rather misleading title of a 'Congress' where no debates, motions, or votes were held. Regional Young Labour groups have been barred from holding AGMs to elect their own committees, and some local Young Labour groups, such as that in Leeds, have had to wait for over a year for ratification from the national committee.

"In place of encouraging popular enthusiasm among members, Young Labour has opted to ditch democracy"

This stifling of democratic structures, however, has exposed tensions. Several members of both the Young Labour and Labour Students committees, elected on the pro-leadership platform, have since resigned in protest over various government policies. Some have done so out of political disagreement, while it seems others didn't understand what they were getting themselves into by appearing on Labour to Win's slate in the first place. Neither bode well for the ability of the right-wing coalition in Young Labour to reproduce its success.

Preparing for 2026

Despite this, the left cannot bank on the right wing project in Young Labour simply running out of steam. We must build a positive case for young members on the left to remain in the Party (certainly no easy feat, but crucial nonetheless) and seize the chance to forge new alliances with previously-unengaged members.

Looking to 2026, we need to be in good form for the next committee elections, with an open and engaging campaign ahead of us. It is incumbent on all Young Labour members, across factional lines, to come together to resist our disenfranchisement by the current leadership. Central to our demands must be the restoration of a constitutional, voting, Young Labour conference, and a committee which really sticks up for our interests and rights.

Without a serious intervention, Young Labour will continue to be led down this deeply troubling path.

Jack Ballingham is a member of Leeds North East CLP, the Yorks & Humber Regional Executive, and is the CLPD Youth Officer. Get involved with CLPD Youth at www.clpd.org.uk/clpd-youth.

Vote for both Jack Ballingham and Jean Crocker in this year's ballot for Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC).



"Quote Unquote"

"We do not trade with a genocidal state"

Pedro Sanchez, Spanish PM, May '25



Bitebacks

"I support Zionism without qualification."

Keir Starmer, *The Jewish News*, Feb '20

Local democracy on life support

Hugh Briss calls on members to defend democratic rules-based selections and policies.

A continuing purge in local government

Twenty days before the 2020 leadership ballot, Starmer tweeted “Selections for Labour candidates needs [sic] to be more democratic and we should end NEC [National Executive Committee] impositions of candidates. Local Party members should select their candidates for every election.”

Since then, the democratic rights of members have been bent out of shape by great slabs of NEC rule changes at successive Conferences, usually with next to no notice. And instead of more democratic candidate selections, we’ve seen the largest number of impositions in the party’s history. While the purging of sitting MPs and the parachuting of Starmer loyalists into safe seats made the headlines, the purge in local government and the blocking of councillor candidates anywhere on the spectrum to Starmer’s left continues to proceed stealthily up and down the country.

Governance of selections

It is now six years since a GMB-sponsored rule change was passed at the 2019 Conference to replace the largely moribund Local Campaign Forums (LCFs) with Local Government Committees (LGCs), as the lesser evil for the right of the party compared to a more democratic rule change.

Nevertheless, the new leadership regime decided that the proposed composition of LGCs of a third each for councillors, unions, and CLPs still looked a bit too democratic – could they be sure the unions would do what they were told? So they decided not to implement the rule change. Instead, what we have seen trialled in London are “Interim Local Government Committees” which are completely unaccountable to local parties and consist entirely of people appointed by the Regional Director.

These bodies are operating entirely outside the Rule Book. For instance, where it stated in Appendix 4 that “shortlisting and selection meetings shall be convened by the Execu-

tive Committee of the CLP concerned” that’s now gone.

Factional assessment teams

Fifteen years ago, applicants could expect to be included in candidate panels if they had a decent campaigning record, showed a reasonable knowledge of local government, and had no serious black marks against them.

Now, under the guise of “professionalising” local government and seeking the “highest quality candidates”, assessment teams have become nakedly factional. Gone are the rights of CLPs to sit on them; instead they are chock-full of Labour First/Labour to Win operatives tasked with rooting out any potential disloyalty. This has taken many forms, from the blocking of left-leaning candidates like Anna Rothery for Liverpool Mayor and Jamie Driscoll for Mayor of the North East, to flat-out racialised purges in Enfield and Waltham Forest.



For the favoured few, however, there can be advantageous deregulation: the rules covering 12-month continuous membership and the residency qualification may be waived in undefined “exceptional circumstances”; they’re given early access to membership lists; or are told in advance how their campaigning record will be judged. Add in that “the NEC has an absolute power to cancel or amend procedures for selections” (Rule Book, Chapter 5) and these procedures would not have looked out of place in one of the greyer Eastern Bloc regimes.

Candidate suppression

The goal of these undemocratic methods is to reduce members’ choice of candidates to a bare minimum – or no choice at all where candidates are

imposed. Large numbers of new applicants are blocked on the flimsiest of pretexts; and growing numbers of sitting councillors are failed at interview. And it’s not just aimed at the usual suspects on the left. Many are more centrist, but come from an older tradition where Labour cared about genuinely affordable housing, an NHS free from creeping privatisation, and schools whose buildings weren’t falling down.

Even if you made it through the application, interview, and selection procedure, regional directors and/or the NEC can withdraw endorsement from a candidate. This sanction was mainly reserved for serious misconduct; but now, just as we saw with parliamentary candidates before last year’s General Election, it has become another arbitrary means of subverting party democracy.

Winners and losers

A cabinet position can mean a healthy second income and a shot at a Westminster seat, but the life of backbench councillors has become regimented and unfulfilling. With constituency parties bypassed, most campaigning is channelled through councillors. Left out of the loop in most meaningful decision-making, councillors are treated like dogsbodies, expected to campaign all year round, and sent here, there, and everywhere in national election campaigns.

Morale among councillors is low, as the butt of much public anger over winter fuel payments, the two child benefit limit, disability cuts, and Gaza. And the upshot has been a steady drip of resignations and defections, unprecedented at this stage of a Labour government.

All roads lead back to the erosion of party democracy by officials acting with impunity in a Party that is haemorrhaging members and support, and tightly-controlled by what Neal Lawson of Compass calls “one small rigid faction”. The only way out of this doom loop is to reverse these attacks and to campaign for the restoration of local party democracy. Local government selections must return to being rules-based, and be overseen by regular, representative, democratic, and accountable LCFs and LGCs.

Labour must provide real democracy for disabled people



Barry Rodin describes the importance of inclusivity and diversity at a national and local level.

Democracy for disabled people must not be denied

CLPD has always believed that greater grassroots democracy in the Labour Party must encompass inclusivity and diversity. So the recommendations of the 2018 Democracy Review to build representative and democratic structures for the Equalities groups covering Women, BAME and Disabled members, as well as Young Labour, were a major step forward. Conferences and Committees for BAME and Disabled members were agreed by the 2021 Annual Conference. Yet shamefully, this year the NEC decided not to establish these structures, despite opposition from left and most trade union NEC representatives. This has added to the disillusionment, anger, and anxiety among members generated by the proposed benefit cuts (eg to PIP) in the recent Green Paper.

To help counter these continuing attacks on internal democracy, CLPD's AGM prioritised promoting democratic equality structures, building broad alliances, and working with other organisations. To ensure lasting and effective democratic processes for Equalities groups, it is vital members among Equalities groups lead the struggle for greater democracy. This involves empowering Equality officers at a local level, including the restoration of full voting rights at CLP executive committees.

Improving access and engagement

As a CLP Disability Officer, I have personally seen how this can deliver a more engaged membership, developing popular policies to improve the lives of their communities, and a wider pool of potential candidates for external and internal elections. But to achieve this we need easily-accessible meeting venues, as well as Wi-Fi facilities to enable online participation by those who can't attend in person. CLPD is currently supporting a rule

change giving the right for all CLPs to hold hybrid meetings.

Organising regular disability group meetings during daytime has also proved popular, particularly among non-working and retired disabled members. Activities included:

- Encouraging greater engagement by disabled members in local activities, such as campaigning and elections, including phone banking, updating election information, and designing and preparing election material;
- Reviewing and monitoring government plans for benefits provision and reforms;
- Increasing collaboration with neighbouring CLP disability officers; and
- Campaigning against welfare cuts – both within the Party and in collaboration with outside disability campaigning organisations and trade unions, especially affiliated organisations such as Unite Community.

A valuable campaigning resource

Motions relating to disability and health issues that have been recently passed at our CLP meetings included:

- Improving Universal Credit for people not able to work;
- Increasing support to sufferers of Long COVID and investment in research; and
- Improving accessibility on public transport.



Recently, a local disabled member successfully campaigned against the local Tory council's austerity measure to impose car parking charges on Blue Badge holders. This increased awareness and opposition among both the local population and Labour politicians, as well as attracting much media attention, including the mainstream press.

I have experienced how local action, supported by democratic structures embracing diversity, engagement, and inclusiveness, can generate wider political campaigns aimed at improving the lives of disabled and marginalised people. This must surely be a fundamental purpose of the Labour Party.

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

Conference 2025 fringe meetings

Party democracy: The key to Labour's success in government

CLPD briefings and updates on composites, ballots, and rule changes – and much more.

6.30pm, Saturday, 27th September. £3 or £1 unwaged

Chair: Rachel Garnham, CLPD Co-chair. Speakers: Richard Burgon MP; Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP; Mick Whelan, General Secretary, ASLEF; Ruth Hayes, Labour Women's Committee; Jean Crocker, CAC candidate; Kathy Bole, Disability Labour; Jess Barnard, NEC; Gemma Bolton, NEC.

Change course – or face defeat

A joint Momentum and CLPD meeting

6.30pm, Tuesday, 30th September.

Co-Chairs: Ollie Hill, Momentum, and Rachel Garnham, CLPD. Speakers: Jess Barnard, NEC; Richard Burgon MP; Yasmin Dar, NEC; Brian Leishman MP; Gemma Bolton, NEC; Cllr Minesh Parekh.

Both meetings are at the Friends Meeting House, 22 School Lane, L1 3BT. All welcome. Not to be missed!

Labour movement history

William Morris's socialism

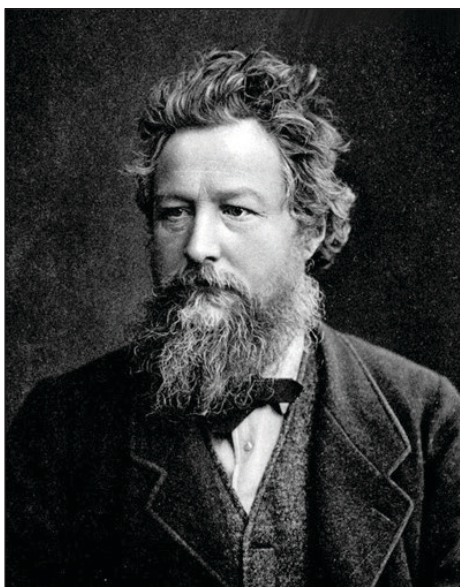
Stephen Williams provides an insight into the originality of William Morris's beliefs and influence.

More than a decorator to the rich

A *Guardian* editorial on an exhibition at the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow remarked that despite Morris's best intentions "Only the homes of the wealthy were decorated by Morris & Co. As he feared, he had simply been ministering to the luxury of the rich". Whilst undoubtedly this was true, the influence of William Morris's ideas stretched a good deal further. My favourite story illustrating this came from Harold Laski, who remembered how during the Great Depression in 1934 he found copies of Morris's *A Dream of John Ball* and *News from Nowhere* in house after house of the North East miners, even when most of the furniture had gone.

The hope for a new art

Morris's conversion to socialism in 1883 was heavily influenced by his belief that capitalism not only involved the economic exploitation of the worker, it also deprived him/her of useful and creative labour of which everyone was capable and had the right to enjoy. Morris hated the manifestation of this in the poverty and misery of mil-



lions in Victorian England, the mind-numbing division of labour at work, the devaluing of craft skills, and the manufacture of poorly-designed and shoddy goods. Morris believed socialism would give rise to "a new art, a glorious art, made by the people for the people".

A belief in the working class effecting change

Equally as important in Morris's adoption of socialism was the contact he made with radical, self-educated, and internationalist trade unionists involved in the campaign to stop the

British government's drift to war over events in the Balkans in the late 1870s. This experience convinced Morris that the working class truly had the potential to lead revolutionary social change, which by the early 1880s he understood to be socialism based on common ownership and production for use, not profit.

With these keystones in place, it would be possible to progressively transform the experience of work, remove all forms of inequality, institute new forms of locally-based democratic control, and restore the balance with nature so blatantly contravened by the quest for greater profits under capitalism.

Further reading to inspire

This is the briefest sketch of Morris's socialism, with which he held faith up to his death in 1896, and it cannot do justice to the originality of his ideas. Further reading about Morris's life and work will reward today's socialists, just as it did Laski's miners, with a vision of socialist change that transcends reforms – important though these may be as stepping stones – and continues to inspire us to bring about a new type of society, one which Morris and his comrades referred to as a 'co-operative commonwealth'.

Stephen Williams is an author and a retired trade union education officer.

See also *The William Morris Society: www.williammorrissociety.org; and The William Morris Gallery: www.wmgallery.org.uk.*

Future Conferences Make sure your CLP nominations are recorded

CLP secretaries must submit your CLP's nominations and your Conference delegates' details using the correct online forms before the given deadlines.

Up-to-date details can be found at www.clpd.org.uk.



Conference 2025 fringe meeting Hands off Cuba!

Join CSC for an evening of speakers from across the labour movement, films, and a fundraising raffle.

Doors open 5.30pm, Sunday 28th Sep at The Casa, 29 Hope Street, Liverpool, L1 9BP.

Guest speakers: Ismara Vargas Walter, *Cuban Ambassador*, Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP, Kim Johnson MP, Richard Burgon MP, Chris Hazzard MP, Daniel Kebede, *General Secretary, NEU*, Gawain Little, *General Secretary, GFTU*, Mark Rowe, *National Officer, FBU*, Micaela Tracey-Ramos, *Vice Chair UNISON International*, Sarah Gilligan, *Unite Young Members*, Roger McKenzie, *International Editor, Morning Star*, Rob Miller, *CSC director*

Help to defend Cuba's internationalism and raise money for the Cuba Vive medical appeal.



Book review

The Story of Art Without Men

Dave Beadle reviews Katy Hessel's history of radical women artists, from those who paved the way in the 1500s, to the growth of feminism in the 1970s, and the emerging recognition they're still fighting for in the 21st Century.

A story of the patriarchy

In the first paragraph, Katy challenges herself: "Could I name twenty women artists off the top of my head? Ten pre-1950? Any pre-1850?" Even if you can do so, the disparity is still staggering. As with so many professions, women's important contributions to the canon continues to remain unrecognised, especially those from Black, international, and LGBT+ communities. It's another story of the patriarchy, in which women have been objectified under the male gaze, and white men still rule a predominantly white male art market.

The Story of Art Without Men not only names names and their works, but also covers the barriers they've faced, their ground-breaking achievements then and now, and how much work has yet to be done. It might seem a big read, but it's really only scratching the surface.

Taking control of the gaze

Women artists have not only had to overcome the social norms of the day – and are still doing so – but their history is also littered with barriers to entry. Refused admission to life drawing classes and artist academies until the late 1800s, even at the radical Bauhaus, inaugurated in 1919, they were too often shut away in the weaving and bookbinding workshops. Even now they remain grossly underrepresented in galleries, exhibitions, and public commissions.

Yet it has often been women artists who've shifted perceptions of what constitutes 'fine art' as they champion genres previously perceived as 'second class' (still-life, landscapes, ceramics, and weaving), and have led the way in new media (film and photography) and new genres (performance art). And in their politics and activism, they have documented the frustrations and complexities of the

everyday, and recorded personal experiences that address race, sexuality, discrimination, and authorship.

A worthwhile read

In essence, the book is about great art by great women artists who have expanded our understanding of what art can mean and do for society. Supported by a glossary, timelines, notes and bibliography, and many high-quality photographs, Katy's book provides bite-sized summaries of each artist and identifies key issues and genres in the art world over time.



The Gaze of a Woman, © Wilma Johnson¹

You can work your way through it from cover to cover, dip in and out of well-labelled (and often overlapping) sections and chapters, or use it as a reference manual when you feel should know more about the likes of Artemesia Gentileschi, Jenny Holzer, or Tacita Dean.

It's a worthwhile addition to any library or coffee table. And, as The Guerrilla Girls challenge us: "When Racism & Sexism Are No Longer Fashionable, What Will Your Art Collection Be Worth?"

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

¹ www.instagram.com/gallerywilma;
www.wilmajohnson.net

Stay up to date with Labour Hub...

Labour Hub is the go-to site for Labour Party socialists, for policy ideas, internal organisation and strategic thinking, with regular updates from left MPs, CLPD, and Momentum. Read it and write for it!

<https://www.labourhub.org.uk>



Labour Hub

...and listen to the Labour Left podcast

Labour Hub's monthly podcast provides long form interviews with key left figures. Labour Left is available on You Tube and all your favourite podcast sites. Just search for 'Labour Left Podcast' or click on the QR code.



"Quote Unquote"

"For Britain to so uncritically align itself with the actions of Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu... is not just morally indefensible. It's a dangerous travesty that risks dragging us into wars we did not start, and whose consequences we will all have to bear."



Clive Lewis MP, FB, Jun '25

Stop following Trump's course on Latin America



Tim Young urges the Labour Government to resist the US right wing's expansionism in Latin America and elsewhere.

Labour turns a blind eye to Trump in Latin America

As Keir Starmer's "true friend in the Oval Office" cultivates his right-wing allies in Latin America, it becomes ever more apparent that the Labour Government needs to take a different approach to the Trump administration.

Latin America did not feature at all in David Lammy's Locarno foreign policy speech in January '25 except as part of an undifferentiated 'Global South.' When he publishes the Government's response to three commissioned studies on how to maximise Britain's global impact, how best to use development aid, and how to bolster economic diplomacy, we may get a clearer idea, but the signs so far have not been good. This includes the continued refusal to give Venezuela back its gold, illegally held in the Bank of England, as part of the Tories' previous support for the US 'regime change' agenda there.

Meanwhile, Trump's alliances with extreme right-wing governments and currents in Latin America are gathering pace, with serious consequences for left and centre-left parties' electoral prospects, for social justice, and for fairer and stronger economies.

Dangerous right-wing alliances

Pursuing his reactionary agenda for both the US domestically and for key countries in Latin America, Trump has promised the biggest mass deportations of undocumented migrants in US history, as part of his objective to "secure the border, finish building the wall, and deport illegal aliens." A first step has been to strike a deal with the ultra-reactionary Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele, paying US\$6m to detain 252 Venezuelans branded "foreign terrorists." Migrants have also been deported to other Latin Ameri-

can countries to widespread condemnation.

Alongside Bukele, the other key bases of Trump's far-right support in Latin America are Argentina's President Milei, Ecuador's President Noboa, and the arch-reactionary Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil.

"The Labour Government needs to be awake to the dangers of US policy in Latin America, and must develop distinctive positions separate from those of the US"

At the time of writing, Bolsonaro is on trial for an attempted coup against the elected President Lula, and for plots to assassinate Lula and other political enemies. Seen as a flight risk, Bolsonaro has an ankle monitor and other restrictions. Trump has tried to pressurise the Brazilian authorities over Bolsonaro to help rebuild his ally's far-right movement. Trump's social media posts included "Brazil is doing a terrible thing on their treatment [of Bolsonaro]... He is not guilty of anything, except having fought for THE PEOPLE." Meanwhile Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced visa revocations for Alexandre de Moraes, the judge leading the Bolsonaro investigation, as well as "his allies on the court" and their family members. In the words of The New York Times, these actions represent "an astonishing effort by Mr Trump to pressure a foreign judge as he weighed the fate of a fellow right-wing leader who, like him, was indicted on charges that he tried to overturn his election loss."

Argentinean President Milei is another Trump favourite, meeting Trump or Elon Musk ten times over 15 months (Musk presumably because of the country's lithium reserves). Milei's mirroring of Trump's positions (such as withdrawing from the WHO, opposing "woke ideology", and anti-climate change actions) helped secure Washington's support for a recent IMF-ap-

proved \$20bn loan.

In Ecuador, Daniel Noboa's fraudulent re-election as President in April gives Trump another ally (or client state), and one which is offering the US two strategically-located military bases, in Manta and the Galápagos Islands.

This group of reactionary politicians have already developed a close affinity with the US far right, and were speakers at last year's US Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC). Since Trump's re-election, that intertwining of such connections and activity has grown in strength, giving the US renewed influence in the region.

Labour must separate the UK from Trump's agenda

However, other key targets of US policy in the region remain contested on an international level. In 2024 for example, 187 countries (including the UK) called for an end to the US's decades-long blockade of Cuba through illegal sanctions, with only the US and Israel voting against.

The Labour Government needs to be awake to the dangers of US policy in Latin America, and must develop distinctive positions separate from those of the US. And not just in Latin America. It also needs to be aware of, and respond to, the implications of CPAC activities for Europe as well: in May this year it held international events in Poland and Hungary, linking Trump's political agenda with far right leaders in Europe's populist conservative movement.

Tim Young is a member of Brent West CLP, a former officer of the Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela Solidarity Campaigns, and is a member of the Labour Friends of Progressive Latin America volunteer team.

Follow Labour Friends of Progressive Latin America at facebook.com/LabourFriendsofProgressiveLatinAmerica



Starmmer must stop enabling the populist right



Bryn Griffiths examines the rise of the populist right and identifies how to stop Starmmer clearing the way for Farage.

Reform is filling the vacuum

Whether on immigration, welfare, council housing, or employment, the retreat of social democrats and centrists from the post war consensus has given the populist right a new space in which to thrive. A key learning point for the left from the US and Europe is that when centrists and former social democrats fail to deliver for our core voters they look elsewhere for solutions and their choices aren't always pretty.

In their excellent primer *The Little Black Book of the Populist Right*, John Bloomfield and David Edgar provide an impressive survey of a right-wing terrain. Including how Blue Labour founder Maurice Glasman was invited to Trump's inauguration and how he describes Starmmer's Chief of Staff Morgan McSweeney as 'one of us'.

But when our leadership tries to offer a semi-skimmed version of Reform, it encourages voters to try the full fat version. Farage was the big winner of the disastrous May 2025 council elections (see p9) and the polls already show him as a serious contender for the 2029 General Election (GE).

As Bloomfield and Edgar suggest, we all face a 'moment of real danger across the world'. We must close that space and prioritise beating Farage.

So how do we defeat Reform?

In the US, key figures on the Bernie Sanders left are talking about an economic bill of rights to address the needs of their own voters. They're definitely onto something, because our Government is demonstrating again and again that 'Reevenomics' does not deliver for Labour's core voters.

And well done to Mark Perryman and Lewes Labour Party for identifying how we stop *The Resistible Rise of the Populist Right*. On issues such as public ownership of utilities, council housing provision, support for the

NHS, minimum and fair wages, public ownership of transport, and a potential wealth tax, the policies of the left always poll extremely well (see also p11). And, as Perryman argues, we must support the case for immigration: if we don't, we lose, lose, and lose again.

Maybe we should ease up on re-litigating our 2019 GE defeat, but in the meantime our 2017 manifesto 'For the Many Not the Few' clearly demonstrated the strength of such a strategy.

Building alliances among the left


To build such a policy programme, we must build alliances, including with the soft left within the Party. And our economic policies are also how we can start to build support in Labour's affiliated unions. The welfare rebellion against the economics of Reeves and Starmmer demonstrates this is a real possibility.

Nor should we constrain ourselves to activity within the Party alone. The left must root itself in every community and trade union campaign to defend working people. And then act as the voice of those campaigns in every Labour meeting. On which, Perryman reminds us of the unity we achieved in earlier years in the Anti-Nazi League and Rock Against Racism, while councils like Preston and Worthing have clearly demonstrated the electoral success of community-based activism (see *Campaign Briefing*, Edition 82).



For such local community campaigns to succeed, we also need to put aside our differences with the Greens and the left Independents, whatever our disagreements on election day. Only by working together can we beat Farage.

Bryn Griffiths is a member of Colchester CLP, the CLPD Executive, and is Vice-Chair of Momentum. Follow Bryn's Labour Left Podcast at www.labourhub.org.uk.



Bitebacks

"Biden said that the United States is now on track to halve emissions by 2030 and meet the Paris Agreement goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Unfortunately, that is not true. Biden presided over a historic oil and gas production expansion and our research shows that his administration's energy policies fall short of US climate goals."

Allie Rosenbluth, US Program Manager, Oil Change International, Sep '24

"Quote Unquote"

"Labour persisting with its fiscal rules begins to look like national self-harm."

Guardian Editorial, Apr '25

"Quote Unquote"

"Labour leadership saying the party will go further and faster in the same direction. They don't seem to understand that it is our current direction that is the problem"

Diane Abbott, X @HackneyAbbott, May '25

Britain is tooling up for war



Carol Turner describes how Britain is playing a leading role in Europe's war preparations and the risk that it will become a nuclear one.

The first steps

Increasing military spending is the first step along the road to war, accompanied by investment in equipment and infrastructure.

By the last half of the 1990s, a global pattern of rising military spending was emerging, reflected in Britain's military budgets under New Labour, the Coalition, and successive Tory governments. What distinguishes the government of Keir Starmer is not that the Ministry of Defence budget is rising, but the speed at which it is doing so and the political will of a Labour government, in difficult economic circumstances, to sacrifice other aspects of government spending – at the cost of Labour's most deeply-held values.

A few weeks after taking office, Starmer announced the Strategic Defence Review (SDR) to make recommendations on increased security. By the time the SDR reported on 2nd June, most of the spending decisions had already been taken.

Despite a continuing rise in inflation and the UK's weak economic performance, in just a few months the government had moved from Labour's manifesto commitment to "set out the path to spending 2.5% of GDP on defence" to announcing an increase to 2.6% starting in 2027. This includes extra funding for intelligence and security services, with a further increase to 3% in the next parliament, economic conditions permitting, and a commitment to 3.5% by the next government.

A few weeks later, at the NATO summit, Starmer announced Britain was buying 12 nuclear-capable F-35A fighter jets, at a cost of \$80m each, stationed at RAF Marham in Norfolk. These aircraft are capable of delivering the US nuclear bombs stationed at Lakenheath in Suffolk. Like Trident nuclear weapons and these bombs at Lakenheath, in the case of war in Europe they will be at the service of NATO.

These are political choices

This increase is to be funded by a reduction to 0.3% in the international aid budget, which was 'temporarily' cut from 0.7% to 0.5% by the Tory government in 2022. It caused the resignation of one of Starmer's ministers and brought howls of protest from the military, the Foreign Office, and NGOs. The Chancellor's spring statement in March, and the Comprehensive Spending Review in early June confirmed the impact on government resources, and filled in some details of what this meant for other government departments.

The Prime Minister is demonstrating, by word and deeds, his eagerness to make these choices – and doing so without subjecting his decision to parliamentary debate or public scrutiny. There has been no honest discussion about if and how war might be avoided.

The decision of 2022 to site US nuclear weapons in Britain, for example, came to light when American nuclear scientists accessed federal budget documents. At the time of writing there is considerable evidence to suggest US nuclear bombs have now arrived at RAF Lakenheath. Neither Tory nor Labour governments have acknowledged US nukes are coming to Britain, and attempts by MPs to ask questions have all been side-stepped.

A key part of European rearmament

Other recent and alarming developments reinforce the view that Britain is heading to war. French President Emmanuel Macron's state visit in July resulted in the Northwood Declaration on UK-French nuclear cooperation. Starmer and the British press focussed on immigration issues, but for Macron and the European media it was nuclear co-operation that was top of the agenda. A week later, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz signed a bilateral agreement with Britain, identifying Russia as "the most significant and direct threat" to Europe, and including clauses on mutual assistance for national security, and on joint procurement and development of defence technologies.

Arms manufacturers are the sole beneficiaries of increased military spending. The interests of the peace and labour movements are not served by preparing for war. On the contrary, the decisions outlined above make Britain a military target, and potentially a nuclear one too, in any coming war.

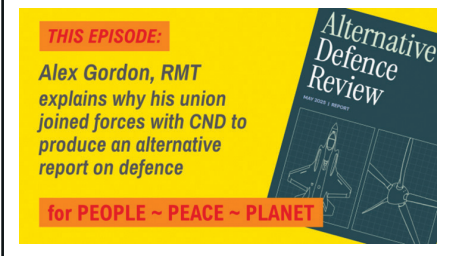
A debate about the build-up to war is already overdue. It is in all our interests to push that debate up the agenda before it's too late.

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

The Alternative Defence Review

RMT-CND's Alternative Defence Review is a joint report from CND and the RMT union for a people and planet approach to security.

Labour CND podcasts on Spotify, YouTube channel, and our website. Download a free summary and the ADR full report at www.cnduk.org/adr.



Celebrating Over 50 Years

CLPD Campaigns For:

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

Tel's Tales checklist

What Labour should do about housing

- Develop a national programme to support and fund improvements in the existing housing stock.
- Introduce a tax on developer-owned land if house building is unjustifiably delayed.
- Only allow council houses to be sold at full market value and the council to be buyer of first resort ('Right to Buy' has been terminated in Scotland and Wales).
- Re-establish the National Tenant Voice to give tenants more say. (Set up by Labour and abolished by the Tory-

Lib Dem coalition).

- Set up an annually-updated National Landlord Register, which requires landlords to demonstrate compliance with the Decent Homes Standard.
- Establish a Charter of Private Tenants' Rights.
- Develop a system that ensures landlords can't evict tenants by unreasonable rent increases.
- An annual levy on empty residential properties.
- Phase out leasehold.
- Relocation payments (and a longer notice period) when renters are forced to move through no fault of their own, eg the landlord selling up.

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

Conference 2025 Voting at this year's Conference

Check out www.clpd.org.uk and our daily *Yellow Pages* to see CLPD's recommendations for how to vote on the following:

- Candidates for the National Constitutional Committee (NCC) and the Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC);
- Subjects in the Priorities Ballot;
- References back in the daily CAC report;
- Key policies in the National Policy Forum report.

Addressing inequalities means listening to members



Rachel Garnham joins the dots between the sidelining of Equality groups and Labour's policy blunders.

Excuses, excuses

In May 2025, Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC) was presented with a paper proposing a further two-year delay in the implementation of committees and conferences for Disabled members and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) members. Proposed by the Democracy Review under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, these committees and conferences were enshrined in the Rule Book under Starmer's leadership but have never been enacted.

The excuse this time round was financial cost, claiming a series of outlandish prices with no recognition of the longer term electoral cost of alienating and failing to listen to our diverse members and trade unions. It has been clear for some time that the current Labour leadership regards the membership – affiliated and individual – as at best useful in election campaigns, at worst a brake on their neo-liberal tendencies which must be kept at arm's length with as little power as possible. It has been well documented that Starmer could

only win the leadership with a series of pledges he clearly disagreed with and has long since abandoned.

It is no coincidence that the same NEC meeting which 'delayed' implementation of the BAME and Disabled members' structures also cancelled Annual Women's Conference, after years of de-prioritisation, sidelining, and minimising policy debate (see p10). The current leadership has no interest in listening to members, particularly members from diverse backgrounds who may provide a challenge to the leadership's direction of travel.

Giving members a voice would have prevented recent policy blunders

The long-term failure to listen to BAME and Disabled members is leading to serious mistakes in government and a fall in support from BAME and Disabled voters. A Prime Minister in touch with Black and Asian voters would never have delivered his 'Island of strangers' speech, not to mention the consistent failure of the government to stop arming Israel's genocide in Gaza. A government which cared about Disabled members and voters would not make such persistent efforts to

impose the brunt of Reeves' new austerity onto Disabled people.

This is the tip of the iceberg. If the government continues to ignore Women, LGBT+, Disabled, and Black and Asian members, trade unionists, and voters, it will not recover support; it will not address the needs of communities who most need a Labour government; and it will lose elections and power.

Racism and misogyny must still be addressed

It's quite clear that the systemic issues of racism and misogyny in Labour, highlighted by Martin Forde's report, have not been addressed. Labour is much more likely to be successful in government if we live our values, implement the Rule Book, and recognise that "By the strength of our common endeavour, we achieve more than we achieve alone."

This means listening to members, reinstating elements of Labour Party democracy that have been abandoned, such the Equalities structures and democratic selections (see p16), and genuinely paying attention to the wise advice of Martin Forde.

Rachel Garnham is a member of Mid Bedfordshire CLP and is Co-Chair of CLPD. She is a former member of the NEC.



Celebrating Over 50 Years of CLPD

About CLPD and our gains for Party democracy

Defending the sovereignty of Conference

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

Holding the PLP and the Leadership to account

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

CLPs and several major unions, especially those unions where the demand for reselection was won at their own annual conferences.

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

Promoting Party democracy

CLPD additionally promoted a range of reforms to give Labour Women (see p10) and Black and Minority Ethnic members greater representation within the Party. The main demand for a woman on every parliamentary shortlist was achieved over the period 1986-88, soon followed by All Women Shortlists.

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



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

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

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

"Quote Unquote"

"The newly elected Labour government, just like the Tory government preceding it, does not want to nationalise Thames and other water companies..."

"Even if new buyers can be found, leaving water in private hands won't address the real issues because new owners would still want a return on capital, which is the root cause of customer exploitation, unplugged leaks and sewage dumping. That leaves public ownership as the only viable alternative."

Prem Sikka, Labour member of the House of Lords and Emeritus Professor of Accounting, University of Essex and University of Sheffield, *Left Foot Forward*, Jul '24.

The CLGA

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

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

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

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

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

Conference 2025

More articles online

Campaign Briefing and many other articles are available on the CLPD website at www.clpd.org.uk – including the model motions and rule changes CLPD encouraged CLPs to submit to Conference 2025.