

FOR THE MANY

PREPARING LABOUR FOR POWER

STUDY GUIDE



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INTRODUCTION

Mike Phipps

Summary

The Introduction looks at some of the underlying reasons for the 2017 general election result and discusses some of the key elements that make up the politics of Corbynism.

Talking points

Why did so much of the media fail to accurately predict the result of the 2017 general election? Is it valid to see centrist politics as a recipe for political collapse and if so when did this become true? To what extent are the ideas of Jeremy Corbyn rooted in the traditional Bennite Labour left and how far do they draw on newer political experiences? How important was the influx of younger members into the Labour Party, and the distinct experiences they embody, in changing Labour's electoral fortunes?

To what extent was 2017 a battle between two competing narratives about the UK? Why was Labour's 2017 election manifesto thought to have played such an important role? What personal qualities did Jeremy Corbyn bring to the campaign?

Action points

The "root and branch reform" called for at the end of the Introduction can be fed into the Labour Party's internal review of structures, coordinated, at the Leader's request, by Katy Clark.

More details here <https://labourlist.org/2017/11/revealed-the-full-contents-of-labours-internal-democracy-review/>

What should activists prioritise?

CHAPTER ONE

CREATING AN ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR ALL

Hilary Wainwright

Summary

On the economy, the manifesto focuses on tax avoidance and the tax burden, the need for infrastructural investment, centred on a National Investment Bank, bringing the energy sector back into public ownership and imposing a price cap.

Hilary's chapter makes the issue of agency central to a Labour government having the capacity to transform Britain. Top-down changes need to be accompanied by the exercise of power from below, within the productive process, to avoid paternalism and encourage maximum participation in the transformation of Britain.

Talking points

What were the experiences of Chile and Greece to which Hilary refers? Why and to what extent should socialists be mindful of them, when looking at the economic policies of a Corbyn government? What models of public ownership might be considered as improving on the post-war Labour approach? How important is the input of social movements, the trade unions and the Labour left itself to building alternative models of public ownership? How could that input happen? Why does the author attach such value to the experience of Lucas Aerospace workers and their plans for socially useful production?

Action points

How can Party members help update Labour's economic policy, using the National Policy Forum process and the passage of resolutions through constituency parties that can be tabled for the Party's annual conference?

Further resources

Reports from Labour's New Economics Conference:

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/uk/hilary-wainwright/new-economics-of-labour>

<https://newsocialist.org.uk/labours-new-economics-conference-part-four-co-operatives-session/>

<https://newsocialist.org.uk/labours-new-economics-conference-part-three-housing-session/>

<https://newsocialist.org.uk/labours-new-economics-conference-part-two-digital-session/>

<https://newsocialist.org.uk/labours-new-economics-conference-part-one-introductory-session/>

<https://newsocialist.org.uk/labours-new-economics-conference-part-five-local-democratic-economic-strategies/>

CHAPTER TWO

NEGOTIATING BREXIT

Ewa Jasiewicz

Summary

Labour's manifesto accepts the 2016 referendum result and promises a close new relationship with the EU, prioritising jobs and standards, emphasising the benefits of the Single Market and Customs Union and guaranteeing rights for all EU nationals living in Britain and no hard border in Northern Ireland. Freedom of movement will end but Labour will develop fair immigration rules.

Ewa's chapter explores the impact of the Brexit referendum and considers Labour's plans in terms of workplace and immigration policy, arguing that the creation of workforces whose members have different statuses has negative consequences for collective bargaining and contributes to further social marginalisation.

Talking points

How were race, class and poverty marginalised by the discourse created by the Brexit referendum? Are tensions around migration due to labour supply and demand, or how the labour process is organised and who has power within it? What do we understand by class and classification and how do the two interact in relation to migration? Why does the author argue that constricting the supply of labour is not the answer to a lack of organisation in the workplace? What's wrong with union labour-only workplaces? What does the author mean by "multiple marginalisations" and how does this connect Brexit to the Grenfell disaster? How are the marginalisation processes Ewa describes happening in our area? How can frameworks for conflict facilitation help overcome marginalisation? What might those frameworks look like?

Action points

How can concerns be raised through the structures of the trade union movement about the pressures faced by unions to police the immigration status of workers where they organise? How can activists organise locally to reassert control over the debate about Brexit? How could the local Labour Party, the council and any other local bodies contribute to reducing and opposing the marginalisation identified?

Further resources

A debate on Novara Media between RMT, United Voices of the World, Movement for Justice and Another Europe is Possible representatives <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xJHLZNlycQY>

A Novara Podcast on the links between categorisation of race and the ordering of class <http://novaramedia.com/2015/07/24/the-invention-of-whiteness/>

Against Borders for Children <https://www.schoolsabc.net/>

Can you see us now: Prophets by Rohan Ayinde (@the_ras_poet: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apweS753CXM>

Failed by the State - three short films about Grenfell and the aftermath by Redfish Productions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tFPCUgjbFA&t=2s>

CHAPTER THREE

TOWARDS A NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE

Kiri Tunks

Summary

Labour's manifesto promises to set up a National Education Service and provide free, lifelong learning. Affordable childcare will be introduced, along with a fairer funding formula for schools, greater democratic accountability, smaller classes and other measures to tackle recruitment and retention of staff. Labour will reintroduce free education in further education and reinstate the educational maintenance allowance.

Kiri's chapter makes a detailed critique of how the vision of a fully comprehensive education system has been destroyed by recent governments and looks at the positives in the Labour manifesto that can tackle the most pressing problems.

Talking points

Why are so many teachers leaving the profession? What impact does this have on schools? What should be the priorities in terms of redressing recent government funding cuts? Is the eye-catching proposal to abolish university tuition fees really deliverable? How important is the democratic accountability of schools? Besides funding and resources, what could governments do to improve the quality of education? What is the purpose of education in the 21st century?

Action points

How can activists strengthen Labour's education policy, both at the level of national policy and locally? Is the local council committed to opposing the academisation of local schools? If not, how can we get them to do it? How can we build effective movements to stop it? How can local Labour groups engage with teachers and their unions?

Further reading

The Mismeasurement of Learning <https://reclaimingschools.org/2016/11/28/the-mismeasurement-of-learning/>

Exam Factories <https://www.teachers.org.uk/education-policies/research/examfactories>

CHAPTER FOUR

A FAIR DEAL AT WORK

Gregor Gall

Summary

Labour's manifesto proposes a new Ministry of Labour to strengthen workplace rights, banning zero hours contracts, introducing new public holidays, raising the Minimum Wage to the Living Wage, ending unpaid internships and employment tribunal fees and setting up a public enquiry into blacklisting. Labour will clamp down on the bogus self-employment imposed on workers and extend employee rights to all workers.

Gregor's chapter looks in detail at Labour's proposals on workplace rights, explains the reasoning behind these ideas and explores areas where the manifesto might have gone further. In particular, he discusses the relevance of the Institute of Employment Rights' A Manifesto for Labour Law and John McDonnell's private members' bill, the Trade Union Freedom Bill, as a possible basis for strengthening Labour's policies in this field.

Talking points

How far do the 2017 manifesto proposals depart from the ideas of previous recent Labour governments? Which of the twenty points in the plan for security and equality at work would be likely to have the most significant impact? How important is the issue of bogus self-employment and the "gig economy"? What rationale could be given for the proposals Labour advance? How important is the idea of a maximum pay ratio? What are the most salient absences from the manifesto's pledges? To what extent does the Institute of Employment Rights' A Manifesto for Labour Law and John McDonnell's Trade Union Freedom Bill provide a useful basis for deepening and extending the 2017 manifesto pledges? How do the proposals on employment link to those on social security and on the economy? Or to those on Brexit and immigration?

Action points

How can activists use the Labour Party's policymaking process, and the internal policymaking processes in affiliated trade unions, to move Labour's policy on workplace rights closer to the ideas embodied in the Institute of Employment Rights' A Manifesto for Labour Law and John McDonnell's Trade Union Freedom Bill? Which of these ideas would make a good basis for local campaigns? Can we build links with local unions that are tackling labour market abuses?

CHAPTER FIVE

SOCIAL SECURITY

Ruth Lister

Summary

Labour's manifesto promises to change the culture of the social security system. It makes detailed promises on strengthening pensioners' entitlements. It promises to end the punitive regime of benefit sanctions and the bedroom tax, reinstating housing benefit for under 21s and reforming Universal Credit. Labour will improve the rights of people with disabilities, above all scrapping the Work Capability and PIP assessments.

Ruth's chapter examines recent trends in rising poverty, the hostile climate for social security in recent years and critically considers Labour's proposals on pensions and working-age benefits.

Talking points

How have recent governments vilified 'welfare'? Do you agree it's helpful that Labour's now talking about social security rather than welfare and why does it matter? Why is social security spending often presented as being "out of control" and how valid is this view? Why does the author draw attention to those in work and on benefits? What are the strengths and weaknesses of what the manifesto has to say about pensions? How fixable is the new system of Universal Credit? What are the main omissions from Labour's proposals? The author argues for a longer-term vision for social security - what should this look like?

Action points

What are the priorities for strengthening Labour's approach to social security? How can we campaign on them? How can these be pushed through the Party's structures nationally and locally? How can we link demands on social security to other issues like the economy and employment?

Further reading

For Us All, Fabian Society Report, by Andrew Harrop <http://citizensincome.org/news/a-new-fabian-report-andrew-harrop-for-us-all/>

Social security: re-naming and re-framing the 'welfare' elephant, chapter by Ruth Lister in Elephants Left in the Room, report by Compass <http://www.compassonline.org.uk/publications/elephants-left-in-the-room/>

CHAPTER SIX

SECURE HOMES FOR ALL

Stuart Hodkinson

Summary

Labour's manifesto promises a new Department for Housing to oversee the construction of a million homes during a five-year term. Councils will be given more powers to build, helping to create 100,000 new affordable units of social housing a year by the end of the next Parliament. There will also be controls over rent rises, more secure tenancies and a national plan to tackle rough sleeping.

Stuart's chapter underlines a contradiction in the manifesto between the radical emphasis on secure homes for all, and a failure to fully challenge the dominant market-led model of speculative house building. By continuing to focus on "aspirational home ownership", there is risk of losing sight of the priority of affordability for all.

Talking points

Why are rents rising so fast? How have government welfare policies worsened the affordability problem? What has been the impact of so-called regeneration schemes on housing security? What protections does Labour's manifesto offer renters? What does the author see as the main omissions and weaknesses in the manifesto? How could suspending the "right to buy" help the supply of affordable housing – and why might it not be enough? What measures could be taken to bring forward land for house building? What new policies and attitudes need to be adopted in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower disaster?

Action points

What steps can activists take to strengthen and promote Labour's housing policy? How can Labour engage with those most affected by housing market failure, especially private renters, those trapped in temporary housing or languishing on waiting lists? How can we improve the regional dimension of Labour's national policy on housing? What can local councils do – and what should they refuse to do – in the face of the housing crisis? After Grenfell, how do we ensure that our councils listen to, engage and involve all residents in decision making about their homes and lives?

Further reading

Hodkinson, SN and Robbins, G (2013) The Return of Class War Conservatism? Housing under the UK Coalition Government. *Critical Social Policy*, 33 (1). ISSN 0261-0183, http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/74333/2/Hodkinson-Robbins_CSP_2013.pdf

John Harris, 'We can solve the UK's housing crisis – with a little imagination', 22 January 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jan/22/solve-uk-housing-crisis-new-houses>

CHAPTER SEVEN

HEALTHCARE FOR ALL

Allyson Pollock

Summary

Labour's manifesto promises across the board investment in the NHS, with specific commitments to halt pharmacy cuts, strengthen specialised care plans, provide free parking in NHS England, improve infant and child health, with a new childhood obesity strategy, end the NHS pay cap, halt Sustainability and Transformation Plans that close services and establish a National Care Service for England.

Allyson's chapter salutes the good intentions of the manifesto, but argues that the tendency to respond to specific lobbies within the NHS has resulted in an incoherent whole. Dismantling the fragmentation and marketisation of the NHS is central to stopping the continued sale of assets and services and making funding increases effective in improving the service.

Talking points

Why does the author feel that making the NHS the "preferred provider" in the allocation of contracts is insufficient? What are the main problems with how the NHS is now structured, following recent government reforms? How does past privatisation in the NHS impact on effective funding for the future? What priorities, based on the NHS Reinstatement Bill, supported by Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell, could be highlighted to undo the damage of recent Tory reforms?

Action points

What should be the priorities in strengthening Labour Party policy on the NHS? How can CLPs have an input into these policy changes? What role can local councils play in opposing the increasing fragmentation and run-down of the NHS? How can this be made a priority in forthcoming local elections?

CHAPTER EIGHT

SAFER COMMUNITIES

Chris Williamson

Summary

Labour's manifesto commits to championing community policing, recruiting more officers and establishing new standards, and in particular a National Refuge Fund to ensure stability for rape crisis centres. Labour will recruit more border guards and firefighters, retaining the Human Rights Act and holding enquiries into historic injustices. Labour will halt privatisation in the prison and probation services.

Chris's chapter makes the case for "common sense socialism" and explores bottom-up solutions to making communities safer and paving the way for a new socialist hegemony.

Talking points

How have recent government policies undermined national security? Should a leftwing Labour Party be campaigning on national security? What have been the other effects of police cuts? What has been the impact of privatisation in prison and probation services? How did privatisation and competition contribute to the Grenfell disaster?

Action points

How might CLPs and Momentum groups begin a debate within local communities on the impact of crime and policing, as Chris suggests? Should the issue of fire and building regulations be made an issue by activists in the local council elections? How?

CHAPTER NINE

LEADING RICHER LIVES

Jeremy Gilbert

Summary

Labour's manifesto promises to devolve more power to local communities, ending the cuts in youth services, preventing the private sector from running child protection and improving protection for victims of abuse. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child will be adopted into law, the closure of post offices will be ended and Fixed Odds Betting Terminals regulated. Rural areas will get more investment and railways will be brought back into public ownership, alongside fare caps and a Crossrail of the north. Labour will extend environmental protection, introduce a £1 billion Cultural Capital Fund and implement the findings of the Leveson Enquiry.

Jeremy's chapter welcomes the commitment in Labour's manifesto to put more money into local and regional bodies as part of its commitment to devolution and explores pioneering ways of involving local people in democratic decision-making. He argues that the manifesto needs to go further, challenging the domination of unsustainable consumerism over our culture as well as our environment, and the tendency to seek top-down solutions, if the environment is to be truly safeguarded and people are to be given more power over their lives.

Talking points

How can local communities be mobilised to exert more democratic control over local political decision-making? Why is renationalising the rail network such an important policy? What else could be done in the field of transport to enable people to lead "richer lives"? How could Labour's environmental policies be developed? Why is it particularly important to avoid centrally imposed solutions to issues affecting the environment? Why do so many people involved in the "creative industries" object to this term?

Action points

What steps could activists take locally to reconnect communities with local authority decision-making? How could Labour's rail transport policy be developed in a mutually beneficial way that strengthens links between UK transport unions and the Labour Party? How can our local council make everyone's lives richer? How do we campaign on that?

CHAPTER TEN

EXTENDING DEMOCRACY

David Beetham

Summary

Labour's manifesto promises a constitutional convention, a reduced, elected second chamber without hereditary peers, an extended Freedom of Information Act, votes at 16 and a stronger register of lobbyists. A Minister for England, more money for Scotland and greater Welsh devolution are all included.

David's chapter welcomes the idea of a constitutional convention to give some popular underpinning to Labour's reforms, but argues that there are ways to strengthen democracy that go beyond the institutional changes proposed. He discusses three ideas in detail that could advance democracy in Britain.

Talking points

What evidence is there in Labour's manifesto of policies for democratising Britain's economy and society beyond the constitutional reforms proposed? What would be the most suitable forms of devolution within England? What reforms are necessary to challenge the grip of corporate power over the democratic process? Why does the author suggest the "one more heave" approach is unlikely to lead to a Labour victory? Is a progressive alliance with other parties desirable and how far should electoral reform be seen as a means of expressing the democratic will of the people?

Action points

Given the generally low priority of constitutional issues in political discourse, how can activists make the ideas raised in this chapter relevant in policymaking and pre-election debate? Should we be seeking to build a "progressive alliance" locally? With whom? And how? How can the votes for 16 year olds proposal be used by Young Labour and Momentum to strengthen their support among younger people?

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A MORE EQUAL SOCIETY

Malia Bouattia

Summary

Labour promises to enhance the Equalities and Human Rights Commission and gender audit all policy and legislation. Labour will appoint a Violence Against Women Commissioner and take steps to fight maternity discrimination. Labour will provide greater protection for Trans, lesbian and gay people, end racism and discrimination against Gypsy, Roma and Travellers and strengthen the position of black and Asian workers. Labour will incorporate the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities into UK law.

Malia's chapter argues that recent years have seen attacks on every institution that promotes a more equal society, with rising hate crime and state-legitimised Islamophobia. She argues that the same social movements that organised against Tony Blair have now joined the Labour Party to ensure a Corbyn victory, but in conditions largely of defeat for these movements, which means there may be insufficient social pressure from below to make his programme a reality.

Talking points

How did New Labour policies in the Blair-Brown era prepare the way for the assault on equality? What more might the manifesto have said on the issues faced by black and Asian communities in the UK? To what extent does the absence of well organised, successful grassroots pressure imperil the potential success of a Corbyn government on the issue of equalities?

Action points

How can activists advance the equalities agenda and strengthen the links between the Party and the disadvantaged sections of society it seeks to serve? Do the BAME, women's and other sections do the job they need to do? How could they be made more effective? Should they push for greater policy-making power in these areas?

CHAPTER TWELVE

A GLOBAL BRITAIN

Glen Rangwala

Summary

Labour's manifesto promises to put conflict resolution and human rights at the heart of foreign policy, in particular reviewing training and equipment contracts with repressive regimes. Specific commitments include supporting the right of the Chagos Islanders to return to their homelands, demanding an independent UN-led investigation into alleged violations in Yemen, supporting the renewal of the Trident nuclear deterrent and cracking down on tax havens.

Glen's chapter emphasises the unusual nature, and weighs the merits, of the specific commitments in Labour's manifesto and explores the omissions and inconsistencies in its defence policy in particular.

Talking points

How does Labour's manifesto on foreign policy differ from what parties usually offer on this subject? How far does Labour's commitment to multilateral diplomacy mark a significant advance in international strategy? Why is the case of Yemen particularly noteworthy? How does Labour's focus on global cooperation differ from traditional Conservative approaches? Does the inclusion of the renewal of the Trident nuclear programme express an incoherence in Labour's defence policy?

Action points

Should activists prioritise a campaign to get Labour to drop its expensive and arguably immoral commitment to Trident renewal? Beyond moving resolutions at Party conference on this, what preparatory work could be undertaken to change the attitude of key unions which support Trident renewal? How can we shift broader public opinion on this? What arguments can we deploy on the doorstep about foreign policy?