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FABIANA

The magazine of the Fabian Women's Network

*With contributions
from -*

**Kezia Dugdale MSP on
Labour in Scotland;**

**Keir Starmer MP on
human rights;**

**Seema Malhotra MP on
global social democracy;**

**Kate Green MP on poverty
and inequality;
and many others.**

The Seas of Change

What direction should the democratic left take?

By **Paulina Jakubec and Reema Patel**

The democratic left faces enormous challenges.

This includes reimagining what social democracy means in the 21st century and redefining how it can effectively capture the imagination of the population again, whilst holding true to its core values and principles.

Such values and principles, at the heart of Fabianism itself, include a recognition of the power to transform lives that we hold collectively - both our own lives and those of others; a recognition of the need to look beyond equality of opportunity to equality of power and greater equality of income and wealth; and a steadfast commitment to the principles of international co-operation, democracy, human rights and tolerance.

Social democracy must also seek to grapple with large scale changes that are transforming our homes and our workplaces - remaining relevant in a world of rapid technological, social and economic change. It must also be adept at navigating the challenges of seismic shifts in politics towards the extremes of right and left both at home and abroad, remaining relevant within democratic political systems and engaging with the public. And it must develop answers to the problems posed by a globalising and increasingly multicultural world where cooperation and collaboration across borders is increasingly a priority for those who seek to ensure lasting social change.

In the last year alone, the world has witnessed seismic shifts in politics; with the election of Podemos in Spain, Syriza in Greece, and the rise of the Scottish National Party (SNP) in Scotland. Within the United Kingdom, the General Election defeat of the Labour Party in 2015 has prompted deep soul-searching as well as staunch difference of opinion on the direction that the social democratic left in the United Kingdom should take. This manifests itself in a difference of opinion, not just about key policies, values and principles - but also about political steer and direction for those within the Labour Party.

This Fabian Women's Network magazine both reflects on and deliberates upon these recent developments in politics at a local, national and international level, and draws in the voices and views of women to participate in our conversation about these issues.

The Fabian Society, as an affiliated think-tank to the Labour Party, and as the oldest think-tank in Britain also finds itself amidst these turbulent seas of change. The willingness of our Fabian contributors to grapple with these complex and difficult questions is as necessary as it is admirable.

It is often said that the future belongs to those who adapt the fastest to such change.

This magazine is our small contribution to that wider task that the democratic left and all those who are committed to its flourishing must commit itself to in the immediate future. We hope that you enjoy reading it, and that it will prompt your own contributions to this wider conversation.

Paulina Jakubec (National Secretary, Young Fabians, and executive committee member of FWN)

Reema Patel (National Secretary, Fabian Women's Network)

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Editor: Paulina Jakubec
Production Editor: Reema Patel

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Fabian Women's Network
c/o The Fabian Society

61 Petty France
London
SW1H 9EU
@theFabians

Chair: Ivana Bartoletti
General Secretary: Andrew Harrop

Never Underestimate Your Opponent

Kezia Dugdale MSP, Leader of the Scottish Labour Party

Kezia Dugdale MSP, recently elected Leader of the Scottish Labour Party, gives us her take on the rise of the SNP, gender politics in Scotland, the Labour Party's offer, and on her vision for Scotland as a fairer and more prosperous nation



You should never underestimate your opponent. Over the last few years Scottish Labour has learnt this the hard way. We underestimated the ability of the SNP to rise from a party on the sidelines to a majority Government in just a few decades. We underestimated their ability to change shape quickly and take on popular political stances and we certainly underestimated their ability to lose a referendum and yet win over a nation. Scotland is home to Labour's founder Keir Hardie and has returned a majority of Labour MPs in every election since 1959. The reality is that we had come to take this for granted.

There are a number of reasons we can give to the rise of the SNP. Firstly, their popularism. When the only thread that links the people in your party together is answering "yes" to the question of Scottish independence, then the rest of your policies and your vision for Scotland can be shaped to respond to the public attitude of the moment.

The SNP have positioned themselves where the voters are. That's why they managed to have a cut in corporation tax as a core policy whilst talking about fighting austerity. That's why they can meet with business leaders who want to drill into Scotland's landscape, whilst claiming to have joined Labour in supporting a moratorium on fracking.

For Scottish Labour, the core question is based on values of equality and fairness. This is harder to define into a single question and harder choices to make, but not something I would ever want us to change or compromise.

The second is about hope. The SNP strategy for years

has been about "talking Scotland up", injecting a sense of pride in our country whilst promoting the idea that the only change we need is to stop being held back by Westminster. The former I welcome, but the latter I disagree with. In Scotland every 10 minutes a woman reports a domestic abuse incident, child literacy rates are worse now than in 2012 and fewer than 1 in 10 young people from the most disadvantaged areas of Scotland have been accepted into university. Not one of these issues require constitutional change, they simply require political will. But, credit to them, in the place of political will, they have hope and hope has prevailed.

'The core question is based on values of equality and fairness. Harder to define into a single question...but not something I would ever want us to change or compromise.'

Lastly, it is about leadership. There is no denying that Nicola Sturgeon is a formidable woman; she is a woman I admire. Her rise in profile and the rise of the SNP are parallel to one another. Her presence in the general election was felt across the UK. Here in Scotland, she was across billboards, flyers and even a helicopter. She was the vision of the SNP many more could get on board with and overnight, Salmond's "woman problem" disappeared from the SNP vote share – a tipping point. She has used her platform wisely, building on the SNP momentum of post referendum Scotland. I have watched her take on the issue of gender equality with particular interest.

It is not an issue the SNP have record on, in fact, up until now, the issue was kept at arm's length. But even now, whilst Nicola Sturgeon has taken forward the gender agenda, the softer, popular approach is being taken. For instance, her voluntary push to have public boards appoint 50% women. Whilst well intentioned, equality doesn't come so easy. A voluntary push will only get us so far, women are underrepresented now and a more robust approach is needed. That's why I have pledged that 50% of Scottish Labour's new candidates in 2016 will be women and I believe that legislation should be in place to ensure that public boards have a duty to appoint 50% women members.

'50% of Scottish Labour's new candidates in 2016 will be women, and I believe legislation should be in place to ensure public boards have a duty to appoint 50% women members.'

The SNP's rise is no doubt a great achievement, so much so that they have broken the political mathematics of proportional representation in the Scottish Parliament. They should be, and have been, congratulated. But their rise has also created a false dichotomy. An illusion has been created that you fit into one of two categories; full of hope by pointing out the good in Scotland and fighting its corner or full of negativity; pointing at all that is bad and working against it.

I reject this dichotomy. Life is never so simple, and politics certainly isn't. As Leader of Scottish Labour, I am full of hope for Scotland, I have a vision for it to be a fairer and more prosperous nation, where every person who wants to get on, is helped to do so. That means seeing and promoting the good, and challenging and changing the bad.

By doing so, Scottish Labour will rise, not just as a party, but rise up along with Scotland itself.



How Similar Are The SNP and UKIP?

Rachel Megan Barker

While the SNP and UKIP might at first glance seem incredibly politically different, the underlying reason for the initial success of both parties are very similar; large proportions of the electorate felt politically disenfranchised with the mainstream parties and economically excluded from an increasingly globalised economy. UKIP and the SNP both provided what was seen as an alternative for those who had turned away from Labour and, increasingly, stopped voting altogether.

The changing face of the British electorate between 1964 and 1997 laid the groundwork for New Labour's landslide victory in 1997; a victory that was based on appealing to the growing group of workers in "middle class" jobs who were generally economically centrist and socially liberal. But while this was an electorally effective strategy, it also left a group of the electorate behind.

From an economic perspective, many of the British working class found themselves out of work for the first time in their adult lives, as a rapidly globalising economy saw the decline of British manufacturing and high paid manual jobs. This was combined with New Labour's continued efforts to appeal to the growing middle class; a group with radically different values to the old working class. Middle class voters who have been to university are more likely to be socially liberal, are far more tolerant of immigration and are far less sceptical towards the EU (especially as many of these voters are younger and have therefore little memory of a UK that was not part of the EU). By making an effort to appeal to these voters, New Labour increasingly seemed out of touch to working class voters who were far more socially conservative, particularly on the issues of EU and immigration.

In Scotland, Labour also left behind large parts of the electorate, but for different reasons; while in England Labour was making a huge effort to appeal to middle class voters, in Scotland, Labour too often felt that they didn't really need to make an effort at all. Many people – probably rightly – felt that the Labour Party was taking their votes for granted.

In both England and Scotland then there were large groups of disenfranchised voters looking for an alternative to a Labour Party they felt had abandoned them; and both UKIP and the SNP were able to paint themselves as this alternative. They both use ideas of patriotism and patriotic language; and both parties utilise the idea that there is a Westminster "elite", which they are somehow different from. But despite the often similar rhetoric of the two parties, the SNP are infinitely better campaigners, with messaging discipline that rivals the early days of New Labour.

The SNP are also far more effective and successful than UKIP at on the ground campaigning, not just in terms of the number of activists out knocking on doors, but in terms of the sophistication of their data analysis and targeting. This was a huge part of the reason for the fact that they managed to win a majority. By contrast, UKIP have never even come close to campaigning success, struggling to build effective activist bases in local areas, which has meant that even when their support is at its highest it has remained evenly distributed across the country, making it almost impossible for UKIP to make substantial gains in the General Elections.

From a leadership perspective, both parties saw their rise to prominence under presidential figureheads in the forms of Nigel Farage and Alex Salmond. However while this is clearly a similarity between the two parties, again the SNP led more effectively. After the 2015 General Election, UKIP failed to get rid of Farage. The SNP, by contrast, had a successor to Alex Salmond lined up in the form of Nicola Sturgeon. And while Salmond had seen his party to their great success in the Scottish Parliamentary elections in 2011, his popularity had decreased, and he was widely seen as a liability rather than an asset for the Yes campaign during the referendum campaign. Replacing him with the incredibly popular Nicola Sturgeon, again, shows that despite the commonalities between the routes of the SNP and UKIP, again, the SNP played the political game most effectively.

Labour Can Innovate in Local Government

Cllr Alice Perry
Local Government Representative on Labour's National Executive Committee



Drawing upon her experience of innovation by Islington and other councils across the UK despite deep cuts to local public services, Alice Perry says that Labour councillors' work as leaders in local government matters more than ever.

Unless something dramatic happens, it looks like Labour will be out of power in national government for at least five years. In the meantime, around 7,000 Labour councillors are actively involved in local government. Labour runs over 130 councils, including many of the UK's major cities and regions.

Councils have had their funding cut dramatically since 2010 and traditionally Labour held areas have been hardest hit by Tory-government cuts. In early 2016 councillors will have to set some very difficult budgets and make choices no Labour representative would ever want to make.

'Labour councillors make a massive positive difference to our communities...councillors continue to champion policies that make a real difference.'

In spite of this, Labour councillors make a massive positive difference to our communities. Despite enormous cuts to our funding, Councillors continue to demonstrate the positive difference voting Labour makes. Labour councillors continue to champion policies that make a real difference. Labour councils are building new affordable housing, paying workers the living wage, promoting green energy, helping people back to work, tackling payday lending and promoting the use of credit unions, regenerating communities and supporting local businesses.

'We are tackling climate change and providing...some of our most vulnerable residents with cheaper bills and warmer homes.'

Despite the Tory cuts, local government is home to exciting innovation. I am proud to be a councillor in a London borough that owns and operates its own district heating power plant. The Bunhill Energy Centre is situated in a densely populated, high rise neighbourhood on the edge of the City of London. The area's high population density makes it the perfect site for a district heating network.

The centre provides cheap, greener energy heating 720 council houses and two leisure centres. Islington Council also sells heat to hundreds of new, privately developed homes. The centre has led to a carbon dioxide reduction of around 60%. It has also allowed us to freeze energy bills for our residents while the market prices went up 20%.

We are extending the district heating network to connect to another 450 homes, using waste heat from a London Underground ventilation shaft and a nearby electrical substation. A growing number of Labour councils are pioneering district heating. Other Labour councils are undertaking innovative solar or tidal power projects. Together in local government we are tackling climate change and providing our families, pensioners and some of our most vulnerable residents with cheaper bills and warmer homes.

Labour councils are doing some amazing things. Even in opposition, Labour councillors are delivering for their communities and flying the flag for Labour values. Our Labour oppositions are holding their Councils to account, scrutinising public services and getting the best deal for their residents.

Only a few months have passed since the gruelling General Election campaign. Over and over again on the doorstep we heard people complain that politics seems remote, detached, out of touch with the lives and concerns of ordinary people. Trust in politicians and public institutions seemed to hit an all-time low.

‘Labour must demonstrate how we are prepared to listen to communities - even if we don’t always all like what they have to say.’

I’ll admit I’ve never heard anyone on the doorstep say: “What we really need is a constitutional convention”. But devolution offers an answer to the disillusioned voters. Labour should champion our own, inclusive vision for devolution – one that empowers communities by devolving power, funding and accountability to local people. Different parts of the UK face different challenges and often local people are best placed to identify both the challenges they face and the solutions to them.

‘Once elected, the Fabian Women’s Network and the Local Government Association play an important role encouraging and supporting women into leadership positions.’

Labour must demonstrate how we are prepared to listen to communities - even if we don’t always all like what they have to say. We need to give a voice to local communities and let them speak for themselves.

There are some very important local elections between now and 2020. Local and national government representatives should reflect the diversity of the UK as a whole. Organisations like the Fabian Women’s Network have done excellent work recruiting and supporting women to stand as councillors. Once elected, the Fabian Women’s Network and the Local Government Association play an important role encouraging and supporting women into leadership positions.

For the next five years many councillors will have more power and influence over their local areas than Members of Parliament. Our Town Halls are so much more than just fantastic wedding venues. If you want to serve your community, deliver progressive Labour policies and make a difference to your local community, stand to become a councillor.



Greater Devolution, Increased Growth



Cllr Judith Blake
Leader of Leeds City Council

Ever since the Scottish Referendum, the desire for devolution to areas of England has become stronger. Leeds and West Yorkshire is no different. Whilst we are still in negotiation with Government on the powers and freedoms of any devolution deal – including the significant benefits fiscal devolution could bring to economic growth in our area – we are of the firm opinion that devolution can lead to far better outcomes for local people.

From the point of view of some of the very deprived areas of Leeds, including the ward I represent, more local decision making means economic growth and job creation. We live in one of the most centralised countries in the world, where for every £1 generated locally in taxes, local authorities keep only 9p with the rest going to the Treasury. If local authorities get more control over taxes generated in their area, decisions can be taken locally by people who understand local needs and priorities, rather than by remote Whitehall civil servants.

Devolution in Leeds City Region has already delivered some successes. We have seen how it can lead to better outcomes for young people who are desperately in need of jobs and training, but who just weren’t getting those opportunities under the old, centralised way of working. Through the Devolved Youth Contract we have helped over 2000 young people move into education or employment with an 81% success rate, compared to a 65% success rate on the Whitehall managed programme. On top of this, devolved Regional Growth Fund money has helped create over 3000 jobs across the region. It has helped us kick-start development in the Leeds Enterprise Zone, meaning we now have over 300,000 Square Feet of modern manufacturing space under development, with businesses moving in and creating much needed new jobs in an area of Leeds surrounded by deprived communities.

Please don’t let the above progress give the impression it has been anything other than an incredibly difficult few years for local authorities. Councils in the north have been hit much harder than other areas. In Leeds alone we have seen the Government cut our funding by around 40%, or £180m, since 2010 with no let-up in sight. Tackling inequality is one of the defining challenges of our age, yet ministers didn’t give a second thought recently to in year cuts to public health and youth offending budgets – budgets that fund preventative services such as those that tackle alcohol or drug misuse, in order to prevent the need for other costly interventions further down the line. Announcing the cuts mid-year, after service-

budgets had been set and committed, has magnified the pain.

Short sighted central government policy failures are all the more galling given councils like Leeds have shown what can be achieved through well considered public sector reform. For instance we have had some significant successes with our early intervention policies, in terms of both delivering savings and achieving better outcomes. Our family group conferencing scheme, where we intervene early to help families find the strength to change has so far helped keep around 1000 children and young people in Leeds out of care and led to a £4m saving from the £1m we invested in the service. If further freedoms were devolved how much more could we achieve?

However it will not just be through devolving ever decreasing pots of public funds that we are able to achieve our ambitions for Leeds. We are also taking a much more proactive approach to attracting international investment to the city, again with the aim of supporting economic growth and creating jobs for local people. Earlier this month I joined the interim Mayor of Manchester and a group of business leaders on a mission to attract investment to the north from Singapore and Malaysia. Currently, when potential investors think about the UK they think of London. However, as the capital overheats and they start to look for opportunities elsewhere, we want the North to be top of their list. We have to up our game in terms of engaging with investors if we want them to take an interest in Leeds, and important to this is our work through our regional inward investment arm ‘Invest in Leeds City Region’ as well as more specific targeted work such as our city’s China Business Club.

The scale of opportunity to attract international investment is huge and with investment comes growth, opportunities and jobs for local people. While Leeds is bouncing back strongly from the recession, we still have too many people who are unemployed or in low paid jobs. The people I represent want me to do everything I can to help us create more and better jobs. That requires growth, and it requires government to trust local areas with greater control and at the same time for us to look beyond the UK for trade and investment. Only local government can act to avoid a reliance on “trickle down economics” and make sure that all communities benefit from that investment and growth: left to national agencies and the market, the rich will get richer and the poor will get poorer.

Constitutional Challenges for Labour

Sarah Sackman

Sarah is a public law and human rights barrister. She is also an executive committee member of the Society of Labour Lawyers.



The Conservatives' unexpected victory in May and the nature of an election campaign which whipped up nationalism north and south of the Scottish border has opened up challenging constitutional questions which could shape the contours of the UK. The intimate connection between constitutional reforms and issues of national identity and electoral mathematics means Labour cannot afford to take its eye off the constitutional ball.

This article highlights four key areas which will define the constitutional landscape in the coming Parliament.

Devolution and English Votes for English Laws

The SNP's sweeping triumph in the General Election has led to growing demands for full fiscal autonomy for Scotland. The Conservatives are committed to implementing the Smith Commission's recommendations but will be reluctant to go further. At the same time, the Tories will pursue their policy of English Votes for English Laws (EVEL). The policy, traditionally seen as anti-Labour, has transformed into a means of blocking the voting rights of SNP MPs.

The devolution debates not only threaten the future of the UK, they put the Labour Party in a particular bind. On the one hand, Labour needs to restore its once impregnable foothold in Scotland by understanding whether support for the SNP represents a desire for greater power, a different economic approach or both. On the other hand, it must try to win back disaffected English voters who deserted Labour for UKIP. Tory electoral scaremongering about the prospect of a Labour-SNP Coalition was effective at preying on the cultural fears of some English voters and their economic concerns about Labour. The task of winning those voters back suggests the opposite response to that required to respond to the SNP threat.

If Labour were to oppose EVEL it could well raise questions among some English voters about whether Labour

best represents their interests. Unlike the Tories, Labour has never been entirely comfortable with a political concept of Englishness. One way of squaring this circle may be a renewed devolution agenda not just for Scotland but for English cities where Labour is politically strong.

As the hollowness of Conservative promises on localism and the "Northern Powerhouse" are exposed, Labour should present a radical, meaningful devolution plan for both England and Scotland.

'Not only is the integrity of the UK in doubt, its place within Europe is too.'

Europe

Not only is the integrity of the UK in doubt, its place within Europe is too. The Greek debt crisis and the unfolding migrant tragedy in the Mediterranean and closer to home in Calais will provide the backdrop for next year's referendum on British membership of the EU. The issue could split the Conservatives, with as many as 100 Eurosceptic MPs expected to campaign for an out vote. I had thought that a positive Labour-led campaign for remaining within the EU – defending its social charter, trade benefits and the advantages of tackling climate change, security and migration – represented a good opportunity to exploit Tory divisions and bring together a coalition of interests from business, environmentalists and centrist voters.

However, with Labour absorbed with the internal dramas of its leadership contest and growing Euro-scepticism on the Left of the Party, which is becoming increasingly critical of the EU's handling of the eurozone crisis and its capitalist mission, the campaign for an "in" vote could be weaker than anticipated. The UK's relationship with Europe certainly cannot be taken for granted.

Human Rights

The Government's plan to repeal the Human Rights Act and replace it with a British Bill of Rights is another important constitutional reform. The legal complexity of implementing the changes (the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights is inextricably linked with Britain's EU membership and the devolution settlement) and the political hurdles – with strong opposition from senior Tories including former Attorney General Dominic Grieve – mean any Bill will face resistance.

'Labour should explain that the Human Rights Act is the means for enforcing fundamental rights in British courts, and a symbol of the positive global role Britain can play.'

However, by installing big beast Michael Gove at the Ministry of Justice, the Government has signalled its determination to see through the reform. The Tories will have to spell out exactly what they mean by a British Bill of Rights. For its part, Labour must be steadfast in defence of the Human Rights Act. This is not simply a question

of engaging in detailed legal debate. It requires Labour to win the political argument for human rights as part of our national identity. Whereas the Conservatives claim the Act has cheapened English democracy by allowing European judges to advance an agenda that voters would otherwise reject, Labour should explain that the Act is the means for enforcing fundamental rights in British courts and a symbol of the positive global role Britain can play.

Electoral Reform

After securing their majority under the First Past the Post system, there is little appetite among Conservatives for electoral reform. More likely are boundary changes and a reduction in the number of MPs which could hurt Labour's election chances in the coming years.

With the EU referendum, British bill of rights, devolution battles and boundary changes all on the horizon Labour will need to be alive to the constitutional challenges in this Parliament. The future of the Labour Party, the UK and its place in the world may well depend on how effectively the Party responds.



We Cannot Be Casual About Human Rights

Keir Starmer QC and MP

Keir Starmer QC and MP was the former Director for Public Prosecutions. He was recently elected MP for Holborn & St Pancras.



The last Labour Government promised – and then delivered – not only the Human Rights Act, but also the Freedom of Information Act, the Equalities Act and devolution. In many ways, that recast the relationship between law and politics. The executive has wide powers, which rely for their legitimacy on our democratic elections in which political parties set out in manifestos their political intentions. The law protects the individual from the executive according to universal standards.

But by the time Labour left office in 2010, it had acquired a reputation for being ‘casual’ about human rights. Setting out his vision of ‘The New Generation’ in his first speech after being elected leader of the party, Ed Miliband highlighted this and reminded the Labour Party that ‘we must always remember that British liberties were hard fought and hard won over hundreds of years and we should always take the greatest care in protecting them’. Being ‘casual’ about human rights was not the promise when Labour entered office. On the contrary, Labour ushered in a genuine break with the past. Until then successive governments had argued that although international human rights instruments, such as the European Convention on Human Rights, were intended to enshrine a simple set of minimum standards for the world to cling to in the aftermath of the Second World War, they were not needed in Britain because individuals here were already adequately protected from arbitrary acts of the state. An arrogant and complacent approach deeply rooted in colonialism.

But for Labour there was another dimension to the historic reluctance to redefine the relationship between the individual and the state using the prism of human rights. A long and deep rift between ‘the left’ and an earlier tradition of what might be called ‘radical’ or ‘progressive’ liberalism resulted in an inconsistent approach to the value of individual liberties and a negligent attitude to the power of the state. For many, the purpose of the Labour Party was not so much to change the state, but to control it. Conscious of this history, the architects of the Human Rights Act, the Freedom of Information Act,

the Equalities Act and devolution saw the case for demonstrating that ‘individuals have inalienable rights’ which ‘should be clearly and unambiguously expressed’.

‘As Labour struggles to define its future, the Tory assault on basic rights and freedoms offers a real opportunity to reassert our core values and beliefs.’

This Tory Government now wants to unpick Labour’s legacy. Proposals to repeal the Human Rights Act and even to exit from the European Convention on Human Rights threaten our democracy. If accepted they would remove basic protection from the individual and give greater power to the state and leave the UK outside the family of nations upholding universal human rights and would reduce not only our standing, but also our influence, in the world. They would also widen the fracture in our own politics by undermining the Good Friday Agreement and devolution in Scotland. Equally, plans to explore the case for ‘reform’ of the Freedom of Information Act are unlikely to result in greater transparency and accountability.

The stakes are undoubtedly high. But, as Labour struggles to define its future, the Tory assault on basic rights and freedoms offers a real opportunity to reassert our core values and beliefs. We live in an ever more divided society. Inequality has grown over the past 25 years and the financial crisis of 2008 has exacerbated the problem. Labour’s starting point has to be a rejection of a society characterised by division. The Human Rights Act, the Freedom of Information Act and the Equalities Act, with their emphasis on human dignity, individual freedom and equality, reflect the values that Labour stands for. But this time, we must not be casual about those values. Instead they should inform and underpin everything that we do as we rebuild our party and define our future.

Britain Cannot Stand Isolated

Seema Malhotra MP

Seema Malhotra MP is the Chair of the Fabian Society and the President of the Fabian Women’s Network, as well as the Member of Parliament for Feltham and Heston.



There is little doubt that the world is in an unprecedented state of flux. Complex forces of change are giving rise to economic, social and political instability globally and sub-regionally. There are signs of a re-emergence of a Cold War “Lite” as the USA and Europe look to the East and the quiet moves by Russia to establish greater dominance. There is some debate amongst senior political circles about whether this power shift is of a greater long term threat to peace or the rise of Daesh and war in the Middle East the impact of which, through the growing refugee crisis, is directly reaching our own shores.

Few images are as shocking as a body of a three year old boy in t-shirt and shorts washing up on a beach in Turkey, or scores of people suffocating with their bodies left rotting in lorries, victims of human trafficking. Events that seem far away are being brought close to home.

The refugee crisis is showing how the new global challenges are interconnected – political, economic and social. Our response to this and other international issues needs to be guided by values and our political philosophy. David Cameron has chosen the pathway of retreat. But Britain cannot stand isolated and aloof from the rest of the world. Cameron’s lack of ability to lead through these challenges is because he is caught between retreat on the one hand, and the need for integration on the other. Retreat is inconsistent with principles of an open economy that pursues international trade and investment to drive growth which Britain needs. And the debate that will dominate this Parliament - potential retreat from the EU - will take us further from the markets that are so important for jobs in the UK.

The Conservatives do not have the answers to the global questions that face us today. Social Democrats in Britain are also facing these new set of challenges. Now, more so than in recent political history, our debates about interventions to promote social justice, the role of the market, social freedoms and the boundaries for regulation will need to increasingly consider a global as well as local context.

There is a paradox we face - whilst having spent two decades welcoming the benefits of globalisation we are now grappling with the consequences of not building greater measures to tackle inequality into our economic system. This is not just in the UK, where analysis by Liam Byrne and others has shown deprived areas where people are being left behind as the South and our cities accelerate. The growth of our economy and indeed in India and China has seen success but not success shared by all.

The issue of income and wealth inequality which is another huge driver for evidence-based social democratic intervention, is itself little short of another crisis. Recent reports by the OECD highlight these trends starkly. Data from the OECD’s recent In It Together report show the richest 10% of the population now earn 9.6 times the income of the poorest 10%; this ratio is up from 7:1 in the 1980s, 8:1 in the 1990s and 9:1 in the 2000s. OECD leaders are saying that we have reached a tipping point. When we look again at the Tories’ response in Britain, it is to cut taxes for the wealthy, and change the definition of child poverty to mask the statistics showing its rise.

The debate about inequality has to address the fundamentals of inequality of power that arises from inequalities of income, wealth and indeed social power and networks. This has worsened in recent years, and the rise of the anti-austerity movement is in part a response to the failure of mainstream social democracy not responding more quickly and decisively. The OECD analysis highlights how redistribution via tax and transfer systems was reinforced in many countries but is weakening again particularly with the nature of social security cuts, even in targeted areas affecting the most disadvantaged.

We are about to enter a new period of revisionism - possibly on the scale we saw in the 1950s and 1980s. It’s not going to be easy, but it is going to be necessary; very clearly, the answers from our past are not going to be the answers we need for the future.

Europe: Never More Needed

Ivana Bartoletti

Ivana Bartoletti is the Chair of the Fabian Women's Network. Ivana stood as a MEP candidate in the European elections, and is Labour's GLA candidate for Redbridge & Havering in London.



Sitting in a café in Lisbon's main market a month ago, I was surprised by the barista's vehement attack on the European troika. Portugal is one of the few European countries that hasn't witnessed a surge of radicalism and anti-austerity movements. Since the previous social democratic leader, Socrates, was imprisoned for fraud and corruption, the conservatives have been in power. The country, previously on the brink of bailing out, has recently improved its outlook despite youth unemployment still being high. Some people say it's in the inherently non political nature of the Portuguese people - or perhaps all down to the recent scandals within the social democrats. Either way, the conservatives have pursued their programme with little opposition.

And yet that conversation in the café, joined by others, stuck in my mind. "It's profit before people here!" they said. "It is all the fault of the global corporations, and the global capital politics can't stand up to". I have heard those statements before, and not just on the continent.

Is there a theme emerging across Europe (and beyond) which is leading to a surge in radical and anti-establishment movements? We have seen the rise of Podemos in Spain and Syriza in Greece, and we have seen the challenges of the social democratic project in facing the more radical left. Meanwhile, the right and anti-immigration movements are on the rise too. In France, for example - although that is hardly news, considering that the Front National was close to winning the Presidential elections just a few years ago.

In the UK, recent polls suggest support for the EU is at an all time low - a demonstration that the perverse immigration debate we've had over the last few months has had an impact. Many now feel that it is Europe's responsibility if immigrants are coming to the UK - that is the irresponsible

message that has been delivered by the Home Secretary, Theresa May, as if the hundreds of thousands of refugees who are fleeing Syria are seeking sanctuary in Britain because of Europe - and as if this would not have happened had the UK been outside the EU. Quite the contrary: this is a crisis that can be helped only by the cooperation and joint work of all European countries.

The reality is, Europe has shown many faults in recent times. A force for good, a project underpinned by the idea that social rights and economic growth go hand in hand, Europe has betrayed the expectations of millions. The Greeks have been forced to endure austerity policies along with no growth plan. That, coupled with the irresponsible attitude of Tsipras and his government, have left the country and its economic prospects in tatters.

Europe is not seen as working for the people it is supposed to be working for. Yet now, more than ever, Europe is needed as a force.

In this context, the scale of the challenge for the social democratic project is huge, and the future is uncertain for all. If there's still space for it, the social democratic project has to deal with the demands of the many who ask us to stop tinkering and offer a more radical solution to change the current system.

However, the recent General Election in the UK seemed to show that a more radical approach does not have wide appeal.

With the left fragmenting, and the rise of the anti-immigration and populist right, the situation is very complex. Victor Orban, the Prime Minister of Hungary, propounds the virtues of making Hungary an "illiberal democracy", raises walls to stop immigrants and roundly insults them - all of this at the heart of Europe. A Europe that was born out of the Nazi tragedy.

What's next then? Next is the fight against terrorism. Next is the fight for economic survival at this very difficult time for the world. Both require Europe.

Fighting ISIS does need cooperation and the sharing of intelligence but also cries out for a new international strategy which responds to the fact that the dynamics of war have greatly changed - wars played out through local tribes do not follow the same dynamics that would apply to old conventional wars between countries.

And building a strong economy cannot happen in isolation. It requires a new approach, embracing research and innovation, and a new role for the state as an enabler of growth.

These are huge new challenges for us to face, and we must be prepared. The debate on Europe is about to formally kick off and the Labour Party will need to be at the forefront of it.



The Policy Factor! - How Can We Build A Labour Case for Europe?

Labour Party Fringe Event hosted by CoVi ('Common Vision')

12:30 - 14:00

Monday 28 September

Pryzom Brighton, Kingswest, West Street, Brighton BN1 2RA

Speakers include:

Seb Dance (Labour London MEP)

Ivana Bartoletti (Labour Movement for Europe & Chair, Fabian Women's Network)

Nia Griffith MP (Shadow Minister for Wales)

Graham Stringer MP (European Scrutiny Committee)

Vicky Pryce (economist)

Zoe Williams (journalist, The Guardian)

Protecting the Life-Chances of Children

Kate Green MP



Kate Green is MP for Stretford and Urmston. She is also the Shadow Minister for Disabled People, the Chair of the APPG on Poverty, and was formerly the Chief Executive of the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG).

George Osborne's fond of proclaiming that his austerity agenda is in the best interests of the next generation. But today's children are paying a high price for the government's policies - as they're growing up, and for their future life chances as adults. Cuts to public services and to family incomes are hurting now, and will do lasting damage.

That this is counterproductive and shortsighted goes without saying. We all know that investment in the early years pays dividends down the line. We all know the importance of a good education. We know that having a decent home, a healthy diet, safe space to play, the chance to explore, learn and socialise with family and friends, are crucial to a happy, stable childhood, and to successful outcomes in adulthood.

'Between 1999 and 2010, under Labour, relative child poverty fell by more than a million children.'

But all are at risk from a government that has shown little interest in the wellbeing of today's children. Nowhere is that plainer than in its wholesale attack on the Child Poverty Act (which the Tories supported in 2010) and the child poverty targets.

Too many myths are being told about the Child Poverty Act, and the achievements in reducing child poverty under Labour. As the Welfare Reform and Work bill seeks to airbrush child poverty from the statute book, we should set the record straight.

First, let's get out of the way the myth that Tory-led governments have successfully reduced child poverty to its lowest since the 1980s. Between 1999 and 2010, under Labour, relative child poverty fell by more than a million children. It continued to fall in 2011/12, thanks to the continuation of measures introduced by Alistair Darling.

Thereafter, and as Osborne's agenda started to take effect, it has not fallen at all. To be sure it hasn't risen either - but that owes more to pressure on middle income families than to improving incomes at the bottom of the income spectrum.

Tories try to use that argument as an excuse to abandon the relative income poverty rate. But the second myth about the child poverty targets, and Labour's approach to child poverty, is that we only looked at relative income. Not true: four measures of income poverty are enshrined in the Act - precisely to take account of the limitations of looking only at one measure. Labour made progress on all these measures. Since 2010, absolute child poverty has risen by 500,000 as a result of Tory policies.

'All are at risk from a government that has shown little interest in the wellbeing of today's children. Nowhere is that plainer than in its wholesale attack on the Child Poverty Act.'

Third, forget the myth that Labour lifted only those just below the poverty line to just above it. Nick Clegg was fond of that one - "poverty plus a pound", he liked to call it. Of course, poverty plus a pound is better than poverty minus a pound - ask Mr Micawber. But more to the point, it isn't true. Family incomes rose across the board under Labour - every income decile benefited, and poorer families benefited more.

Fourth, while it's right that tax credits were an important and very effective part of Labour's anti-poverty strategy, increased parental employment, especially lone parent employment, played a crucial role. And it was tax credits that helped to make that rise in parental employment possible. Tacitly, the government acknowledges that, with its ambitions for universal credit. But in taking his axe to UC, Osborne has ensured that it will do less to make work pay and lift working families out of poverty.

The so-called national living wage can't compensate for the losses families will suffer from freezes and cuts to in-work benefits.

Finally, let's nail the myth that Labour didn't pay attention to wider experiences of poverty. Of course poverty is multifaceted - so is the Child Poverty Act. An adequate income on which to raise your children is a prerequisite for improved outcomes across a range of indicators. But scrapping the Act also means losing explicit provisions

in relation to wider elements of poverty, including housing, health, parental employment, education, and parenting. Labour's attention to family incomes accompanied improvements across a range of outcomes for children.

Now the Welfare Reform and Work bill puts all that progress under threat. As the bill proceeds, Labour's priority will be to resist these changes. And we will be fighting every step of the way to protect the childhoods and future life chances of every one of our children.



Transforming Women's Lives : A Report on the FWN Mentoring Scheme

Dr Rosie Campbell & Christine Megson

Dr Rosie Campbell is a Reader in Politics at Birkbeck University, and has undertaken an evaluation of the Fabian Women's Network mentoring programme. Christine Megson is an FWN committee member, and co-ordinates the mentoring programme with Caroline Adams and Kate Talbot.

To date 100 women have participated in the Fabian Women's Network (FWN) mentoring and political education programme and a new cohort starts their journey in September 2015. Though the aims of the programme remain the same, the volume of the alumni grows, giving new role models, new opportunities, new ideas and new contacts for those in the network. We set out to increase women's political understanding and confidence, increase the impact and influence of women in politics and public life and increase their networks. We wanted to find women who were looking to move forward in political or public life and network them more effectively with those with more experience who would have a lot to share.

After four years we now have so many women who have achieved in different ways that the network is powerful. Nearly every woman who has been through the programme has either gained promotion at work or in their political and public life roles, spoken on a national or international event or been published in the national media. Many of those 21 elected as local councillors in 2014 have been rapidly promoted to cabinet positions and are not just influencing their local politics but are writing about it and speaking on panels and on TV. The 7 FWN mentee PPCs in the recent election gave brilliant opportunities for other mentees to experience what it means to be selected for that role as they spent time together in hustings, on the doorstep and on election night. Informal advice circulates on maternity rights for councillors through to handling issues in local CLPs or preparing a speech for a conference.

What is significant is the broadening background of mentees as the network grows: from farmer to filmmaker and film director, fashion editor to nurse and doctor, human rights lawyer to human rights campaigner, civil servants and charity executives but all sharing Fabian values and wanting to find or extend their political voice and public

life role. The age range now extends from 20 – 57, the ethnic diversity covers every category; we have increasing numbers from Wales and Scotland and outside London. In addition to the work on political education skills, there has been an increased emphasis on the skills needed to succeed in public life as so many mentees are active as trustees in charities working to support disadvantaged communities across the globe and indeed—given the energy of FWN mentees—creating their own charities.

Dr Rosie Campbell, Professor Joni Lovenduski and Kate Talbot (Movement for Change and FWN Executive Committee) are currently undertaking the second full review of the Fabian Women's Networking Scheme. In our view the scheme offers a tremendous opportunity for successful applicants to be mentored by women who have forged successful careers in both politics and public life.

However, the scheme offers far more than mentoring alone, it includes significant political skills training across a range of key areas. Alongside the tangible skills that participants develop throughout the programme, mentees are encouraged to foster two of the key ingredients of a successful career in politics and public life; namely confidence and personal networks.

One of the most striking findings of the evaluation is how critical the development of networks of fellow activists is for encouraging women to put themselves forward for public roles. The mentees themselves have formed a growing network who share job opportunities and campaign for each other. In our view the boost to the skills and confidence levels of the individual participants combined with the creation of this expanding network means that the investment made in the scheme will pay sizeable dividends in years to come by broadening the pool of women willing to put themselves forward for public and political office.

The second evaluation report of the FWN mentoring scheme will be published in November 2015.

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Our thanks go to all those MPs, members and supporters who have contributed to and supported the work of the Fabian Women's Network in recent years. We would also like to thank the staff of the Fabian Society for their invaluable support, as well as the mentors on the FWN mentoring programme for their valuable time. Many thanks also to Unison, who have supported the print of this publication.

With thanks to all those who have served on the Fabian Women's Network Executive Committee (2013 - 2015):

Seema Malhotra MP (President)

Shamshia Ali

Jayne Almond

Ivana Bartoletti

Ellie Cumbo

Louisa Douma

Susie Gilbert

Farah Hussain

Sarah Hutchinson

Sara Hyde

Paulina Jakubec

Sofie Jenkinson

Claire Leigh

Christine Megson

Abena Oppong-Asare

Reema Patel

Charlotte Proudman

Felicity Slater

Kate Talbot

Shama Tatler

Abigail Wood

For the latest news and updates:

Website: www.fabianwomen.org.uk

Twitter: @FabianWomen

Facebook: [facebook.com/FabianWomen](https://www.facebook.com/FabianWomen)

E-mail: fabianwomen@fabians.org.uk

FABIAN WOMEN'S NETWORK FRINGES: PARTY CONFERENCE // SEPT 2015

We would be delighted to see you at some of our fringe conference events at Labour Party Conference in 2015.

Defending the Human Rights Act

In partnership with the Society of Labour Lawyers

14:15 - 15:30

Monday 28th September

Holiday Inn, Kings Road 137, City Centre, Brighton BN1 2JF

The event is to mark the 15th anniversary of the Human Rights Act coming into force.

Speakers will discuss the impact of the Human Rights Act over the last 15 years and what any Bill of Rights would need to address if it were to replace the Human Rights Act.

Keir Starmer QC & MP

Emily Thornberry MP

Cllr Reema Patel (Secretary, Fabian Women's Network and democracy commentator)

Kate O'Rourke (Chair of Society of Labour Lawyers and solicitor)

Ivana Bartoletti (Chair, Fabian Women's Network)

Have We Taken Women For Granted?

In partnership with the Local Government Association Labour Group

12:30 - 13:45

Sunday 27 September

Holiday Inn, Kings Road 137, City Centre, Brighton BN1 2JF

Helen Goodman MP

Fiona Twycross AM (Economy and Fire Spokesperson, London Assembly Labour Group)

Cllr Alice Perry (Islington Councillor and NEC Representative)

Ivana Bartoletti (Chair, Fabian Women's Network)

Abena Oppong-Asare (Deputy Leader, Labour Group, Bexley Council)

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