

YOUNG  
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*Anticipations*  
Summer 2024

*The Next*

100

DAYS



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To find out more about the Fabian Society, the Young Fabians, the Fabian Women's Network and our local societies, please visit our website at [www.fabians.org.uk](http://www.fabians.org.uk)

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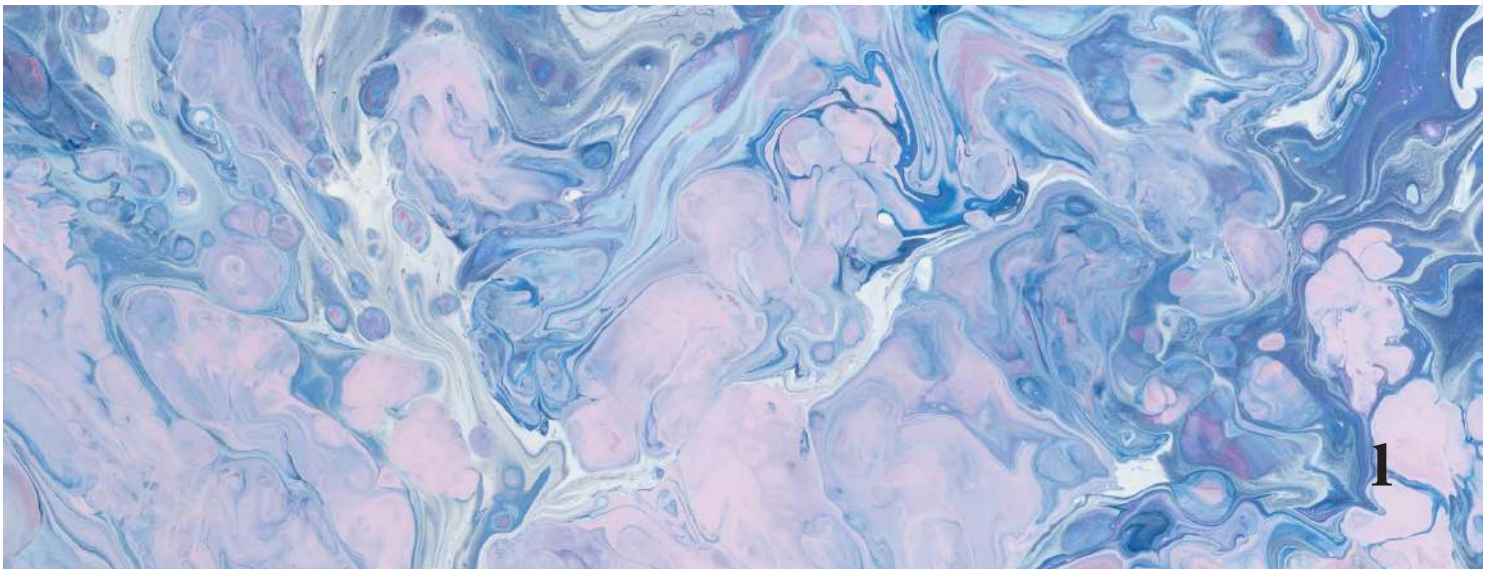
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## *Editor's Welcome*

### Yusuf Amin

I wholeheartedly welcome all of you all to this Summer 2024 edition of Anticipations. This is the first issue under the new Young Fabian Executive Committee and most importantly, the first edition in over 14 years to now be made under a Labour government. It has indeed been a long wait for power. A new world is in our hands, but it is up to us to decide what to do with it.

With this edition of Antics, I sought to theme it around Labour's return to government. It has often been popular to judge a new administration based off its first 100 days. So in the spirit of '100 days', this edition is a collection of ideas that can be enacted in the short-term to steer Britain to a better place after 14 years of Tory failure.

I'd like to give a special thanks to our YF Chairs and Ed Selkirk Ford for helping with the making of this Antics issue, and another special thanks to Natasha Irons MP for her contribution. I now invite you all to read and enjoy what our bright Young Fabians think the government should do in its next 100 days.



## *Co-Chairs' Foreword*

### **Francesca Reynolds & Patrick Cook**

**M**embers of the Young Fabians grew up and became adults under the disastrous governments of the last 14 years. For the first time in our adult lives we have a Labour government to support, work with, and hold to account. We have years of frustration, a sense of urgency, and relief. It has coincided with a period of change and restoration at the Young Fabians. The result is a truly once in a generation opportunity for the organisation to redefine itself and make a genuine impact on British politics.

We believe that the introspection of the last few months has put us in a good place to seize this opportunity. We are working hard to create a Young Fabians that is both welcoming and focused, that is recognisably different but that still keeps the central ethos of providing opportunities for young people.

The relaunch of *Anticipations* is a big step on that journey. We have 16 informative and engaging articles from a diverse set of authors. This issue is brimming with realistic, ambitious and impactful ideas for this new Labour government. Our launch event will be an opportunity to discuss how to make them a reality, and the location will reflect the fact that the majority of our members live outside of London. A new generation of thinkers with a feeling of restlessness and a truckload of new ideas, and a Young Fabians that is equipped to get those ideas heard. It is a truly exciting time, and we are very grateful to you all for being a part of it.



## *MP's Foreword*

### **Natasha Irons MP**

**T**he chances of becoming a Member of Parliament are slim. The chances of becoming a Labour MP, under a Labour government are slim to none, and yet here I am. Croydon East's first Labour MP, under a Labour government with one of the biggest majorities our country has ever seen.

In July, we won an opportunity to serve our country, to rebuild communities and change lives for the better. Why we won is simple: people wanted change.

Since arriving in Parliament, I have been struck by the sense of urgency that runs through the Labour benches. All of us, whether seasoned MPs who have sat in frustrated opposition for too long or bewildered newbies still trying to find their way around, know what is at stake for our communities if we don't deliver the change that this country needs.

These first 100 days in power have shown the relentless focus this Labour government has on getting things done. Whether it's protecting workers or getting Britain building again, we are not squandering this chance for change. I'm looking forward to seeing how Young Fabians will add to this exciting agenda and help shape ideas for the next 100 days.



*Anticipations*  
**Summer 2024**



# *Reforming the Criminal Justice System to Ensure Fair and Equal Treatment for Disabled People*

**Kerrie Portman**

**D**isabled people are some of the most vulnerable people in society. It is the government's responsibility to protect the vulnerable, but all too often disabled people find themselves in contact with the criminal justice system. Looking at prominent invisible disabilities, 50% of those entering prison have a neurodiverse condition. 52% of those in prison have a mental illness. Of these, 27% have anxiety disorders, 27% have a personality disorder, 20% have PTSD and 10% have psychotic disorders. 39% of those in police custody have a mental illness, 86.2% of those have a repeated history of self-harm and/or suicide attempts. This is an enormous topic with many intersectional considerations. This over-criminalisation is despite the fact that both neurodiverse and mentally ill people are more likely to be the victims of crime. I will focus on the concern of people being criminalised due to their disability and the lack of training and standardisation among criminal justice professionals (CJP).

The first issue is that people can be criminalised due to their disability. When someone with a significant mental illness or disability comes into contact with the criminal justice system, it is often a consequence of the state's failure to support that person sooner. This has been exacerbated by the Tory's 14 year-long cuts to mental health support, social care, housing, benefits, employment support and other community services. Further, there is ableism embedded in some aspects of the law, whilst other elements of the law criminalise people for not understanding social norms, even when that is part of their disability. When laws are based on social norms, such as harassment, criminalising someone who has a disability meaning they cannot understand social norms is criminalising someone for having a disability. Examples include the Reasonable Persons test, laws that omit mens rea and the concept of 'ought to have known.'

These legal concepts fail to take into account the levels of actual understanding of defendants with invisible disabilities. The Ministry of Justice commented that 'challenging behaviours' associated with some neurodiverse conditions, increased difficulty finding a job, struggle to understand the law and lack of appropriate support were factors increasing the risk of neurodiverse people committing crimes initially and then reoffending. The Criminal Justice Joint Inspection further noted that autistic people were prone to inaccurate pleas, and thus inappropriate convictions and outcomes. This is perhaps in part due to the criminal justice system being set up in a way that provides the defendant with very little chance to share their perspective in unforgiving court structures. The Sentencing Council ought to take mitigating factors, such as medical conditions, into account when deciding sentencing. However, this still leaves a disabled person with a criminal record and there is still a chance their disability and its impact will not be adequately understood at this stage. Criminalising someone for being disabled is draconian and will not stop offending, which ought to be the goal. In Labour's next 100 days, the government should reduce the over-criminalisation of those with disabilities by investing in services needed to support disabled people to prevent unnecessary contact with the criminal justice system. They should determine at the initial stages of a criminal investigation if the causes are due to a defendant being disabled and if so, address the issue with support rather than punishment. The government should also be encouraged to modify laws so that they take into account behaviour that is a symptom of a person's disability.

Furthermore, those with invisible disabilities face issues with the lack of training amongst CJPs and the lack of standardisation in assessment and support for disabled defendants. This is worsened by a lack of standardised definitions within the criminal justice system and reliance on self-reporting from the defendant who may be unwilling to disclose their conditions due to stigma or previous poor experiences with the criminal justice system. On top of a lack of standardisation, there is a lack of national training for the police and other CJPs. According to the Prison Reform Trust, three out of four surveyed CJPs reported the impairments of disabled defendants were sometimes or always missed. The Prison Reform Trust also noted that 70% of people who died from self-inflicted means in prison had a previously identified mental illness, but this was only flagged in half the cases. With CJPs failing to notice invisible disabilities three-quarters of the time, and even when these impediments are noticed there isn't clear guidance on what is available or who is responsible for providing it, disabled defendants are left without the support they need and are entitled to. Alongside the distress this can cause, it raises concerns about a lack of informed consent and inability to accurately present the full context of the case and inappropriate outcomes. This impinges on disabled defendants' human right to a fair trial. Disabled defendants ought to receive the support they need, have equal access to the support available and have their human rights met.

The government can vindicate those with invisible disabilities in their next 100 days by introducing training for CJPs in identifying and supporting those with invisible disabilities, including how disability symptoms can manifest themselves in criminal behaviour. The government should also compile and publish comprehensive guidance on all the support available to disabled defendants which is accessible for the general public, including who is responsible and accountable for referrals and implementation. Assessments and supports should be universal and not reliant on CJPs who fail to recognise invisible disabilities three-quarters of the time.

Disabled people have been wronged by the criminal justice system for decades, but now the new Labour government can ensure fair treatment for them in their next 100 days. The government should rewrite laws to avoid criminalising symptoms of a disability, publish a comprehensive guide on all the support available for disabled defendants, increase accountability of CJPs to provide support, implement mandatory training for CLPs and standardise assessments and support. Most importantly, the government has a responsibility to ensure people are not being criminalised for the sheer misfortune of being disabled.

*Kerrie is an autistic, Care Experienced writer, researcher, activist and student, currently studying HSPS at the University of Cambridge.*





# Revenue Raisers: The Case for Tax Reform

Will Knight

**K**eir Starmer's new government is facing a perfect storm of fiscal constraints. Public services in desperate need of funding have to contend with tight borrowing rules, manifesto commitments on personal taxation and limited economic growth. With Rachel Reeves' announcement of a £20bn "black hole" in funding, it is now imperative that new and better sources of tax revenue must be found.

In the next 100 days, Labour should look to close key loopholes in the tax system. For example, the Business Asset Disposal (BAD) relief, applies to profits from the sale of business assets and reduces the applicable rate of Capital Gains Tax. The Office of Tax Simplification described BAD relief as 'mismatched' in its attempt to 'stimulate business investment and risk-taking'. Not only is there an ethical imperative to eliminate a tax loophole available to shareholder-managers, but also a clear fiscal benefit, raising £4 billion for the Treasury. Other short-term measures could strengthen public finances, namely a windfall tax on excess profits made during the COVID-19 pandemic. As proposed by the Resolution Foundation, this could be implemented through a Corporation Tax surcharge of 10% on firms who made more during the 2020-2021 than in previous years, raising around £130 million for the Treasury.

Additionally, there remains political precedent. After entering into government in 1997, Gordon Brown's Treasury instituted a tax on excess profits of privatised utility companies. This revenue was used to fund welfare-to-work programmes, the economic benefit of which perhaps eased business concerns. Thus, Rachel Reeves has the option to perhaps institute a windfall at a higher rate, if the increased revenues are invested in pro-growth areas, such as green subsidies and infrastructure. A strong political narrative could also be established if the tax income is spent rebuilding the NHS, with pandemic profits spent repairing the damage COVID-19 did to public health.

But in the long-term, the government's changes to tax policy must go further. In the UK, wealth inequality is far wider than income inequality, while capital incomes are taxed far less than labour incomes, a fundamentally inequitable system. In order to create long-term prosperity, Labour must shift the tax burden in the next 100 days, to both improve funding for public services and move towards a more egalitarian system. Central to this must be changes to Capital Gains Taxation (CGT). By equalising CGT with Income Tax, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) estimates that £50bn would be raised over four years. This would significantly bolster public finances, limiting the need for cuts and beginning to roll back 14 years of Conservative austerity.

However, there are concerns that an increase in CGT could result in a potential short-term hit to business confidence and a longer-term reduction in private investment. While the long-term risk of disincentivising investment is significant, a careful and informed approach to CGT reform can help minimise this risk. Whilst higher CGT rates will most likely lead to some reduction in growth, it must be noted that it is not the sole factor impacting investment.

Both Sweden and Germany have higher headline rates of capital gains taxation, and yet invest higher percentages of GDP every year. Investment is not beholden solely to tax rates and should be considered holistically. Therefore, if Labour uses revenue from higher CGT rates to persist with its pro-investment policies, including development of a national wealth fund, any reduction in business activity can be significantly limited. While there are some political risks, the critical state of public finances suggests that the danger of inaction, and letting public services crumble, is far higher than that of increasing CGT.

Furthermore, extending the tax base of other revenue streams could serve to further strengthen public finances. By extending National Insurance Contributions (NIC) to all investment income and pension-age individuals, the IPPR estimates revenues of £12 billion a year. This decision carries political risk, but the strong association between NIC and the NHS could allow for greater political momentum, especially if revenues are ring-fenced for healthcare.

All tax reforms involve trade-offs. Economic risks and political difficulties will plague any decision made. However, by recognising the inequities within the tax system, and by ensuring that economic risks are balanced with judicious changes to the tax base and promotion of pro-growth policies, these issues can be minimised. To that end, within the next 100 days, I would recommend:

- ▶ Institution of a 10% Corporation Tax surcharge on excess profits generated during the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with support for HMRC claw-backs of poorly targeted spending.
- ▶ Immediate closure of the Business Asset Relief tax loophole on CGT.
- ▶ Begin consultations with the business community both on CGT rates, and potential changes to the tax base.
- ▶ Subsequent creation of a more equal balance between CGT and Income Tax.
- ▶ Phased introduction of NIC to investment income, with revenues ring-fenced for the NHS.

*William has just finished his 1st year studying Modern History and Economics at the University of Manchester. Having joined the Young Fabians in 2024, he is particularly interested in tax policy and the creative economy.*



## *Britain Re-imagined: Labour's Diplomacy in the First 100 Days*

**Laurence Hayward**

**I**n his victory speech outside Number 10, Keir Starmer spoke of his desire to lead “a rediscovery of who we are” as a country. His story is of the Britain of old—sombre, sensibility, reliability and a safe pair of hands. This is of course in stark contrast to recent years where Britain has felt increasingly unstable, unserious and populist. This story has largely focused on domestic politics, but the image of a new look, grown-up Britain could also be key to a successful diplomacy and a strategy for international renewal. In Foreign Secretary David Lammy’s previous writings for the Fabian Society, the theme of grown-up diplomacy shines through. Lammy promises an end to the performative chauvinism of the last Conservative governments, as well as the naïve, uncompromising and at times divisive idealism of Labour’s recent leadership.

British diplomacy will only succeed if it is deemed credible and popular at home. The huge majority which Labour achieved has already made Keir Starmer the most popular new kid on the block in international politics. World leaders want to do business with politicians who are in strong positions domestically and are likely to be in power for the foreseeable future. Starmer fits this bill in a way that other progressive leaders – Trudeau, Schultz and Biden – no longer do. To their credit, Labour have capitalised on this opportunity. Their diplomacy has been energetic and effective. In his recent trip to the US for the NATO summit, Starmer was able to demonstrate the necessary continuity in Britain’s commitment to Ukraine, but also to show the British public how much world leaders want to engage with him. Additionally, Starmer’s speech, in which he made the positive case for international law and the European Court of Human Rights, was not just refreshing for EU leaders, but also the British public who are currently watching Conservative leadership hopefuls attempt to outdo each other in their willingness to leave the ECHR. The crowning achievement, however, was the phone call President Biden made to Starmer on his first day in office. In this call, which was filmed and made into a sleek social media clip, Biden congratulates the new Prime Minister and quickly, without being prompted, mentions America’s commitment to the ‘special relationship’. This was the stuff of British diplomats’ dreams, and gold dust for a new Labour government. It was also publicised to the British people. Labour must continue to ‘sell’ its foreign policy in this way.

Lammy’s ‘progressive realism’ is a good starting point for Labour, and one which is well suited to a world filled with practical challenges alongside moral failings. The Israel–Palestine conflict has also been politically costly for Labour. The Party lost or came close to losing a number of traditionally safe seats to the so-called ‘pro-Gaza independents’. Labour did commit to supporting a ceasefire, release of hostages, two-state solution, and immediate recognition of a Palestinian state before the election. However, they took too long and did not communicate this position effectively, leading to backlash. Lammy must continue to meet with Israeli and Palestinian representatives and contribute to a peace effort in the region. However, this needs to be done tactfully and communicated to the public effectively.

But old tensions have not gone away, with China and Taiwan and Serbia and Kosovo, to name just two. There are real opportunities here. Despite Brexit, the UK remains one of the most influential actors in the Western Balkans and has a respected role to play in supporting Kosovo’s sovereignty, both diplomatically and militarily. If Labour is able to secure a closer relationship with the EU and is able to maintain good relations with a US governed by Trump, it could return to its pre-Brexit position of trans-Atlantic interlocuter.

Culture matters in diplomacy and Britain has historically benefitted from a stereotype of serious, unassuming, hard-working and stable. The damage done to this reputation by Brexit, populism, and the Conservative’s continued bashing of international law, norms and our allies cannot be overstated. However, as shown by Keir Starmer’s reception at international summits, the world misses having the old-Britain at the table. Not as a baby willing to throw its toys out of the pram at the first sign of inconvenience, but as a serious, respected and capable international player. It is imperative that for the next 100 days, Labour must continue to peddle this image.

The government must also inject some real moral backbone into their diplomacy to avoid becoming nothing men. This means standing up for Ukraine, being serious on international development, and towing a careful line on players like Israel, China and Saudi Arabia. Britain needs a relationship with all of them, but also has to work to hold them to account on their policies. Lammy’s formulation is ‘realist means for progressive ends’, but we should not lose sight of the progressive ends: combatting poverty, climate change and authoritarianism.

Labour has a chance to not only, as Lammy puts it, build a ‘Britain re-connected’, but actually a Britain wholly reimagined. One which is more confident, more reliable, more serious and therefore a better ally and a fiercer opponent. The work towards this has begun, but in the coming weeks it will take energy and a real commitment to foreign policy to make it a reality. Riding on the wave of a large majority, and spurred on by pressing challenges, now is the time to achieve a Britain reimagined in the next 100 days.

*Laurence studies History and International Relations at King’s College London and is a research fellow at the Centre for Grand Strategy.*

# Labour's Housing Revolution for the next 100 Days

Alex Toal

Nowhere is Labour making a clearer difference so quickly than in housing. Already ministers have announced the restoration of mandatory housing targets ahead of more ambitious planning reform, a generational improvement in renters' rights, and a long-overdue reform of leasehold. This package is a welcome start to fixing the housing crisis, whose headline figures we know too well: house prices and rents rocketing beyond wage growth, the lowest quality and coldest homes in Europe, and enough children in temporary accommodation to fill a city the size of York. The housing sector is eager to step up to this moment, but their needs often slip under the radar under the more headline-grabbing discussions about the housing crisis. So what are some of the priorities of the housing sector, the organisations public and private trying to be a part of Labour's vision for a housing revolution in the next 100 days?

## Homes of the Future

While Rishi Sunak publicly junked a number of net zero programmes at the tail-end of his administration, quietly the government and the housing sector have been implementing a programme to dramatically reduce the environmental impact of our homes. First is the Future Homes Standard (FHS), regulations coming in 2025 which will reduce the carbon output of new homes by as much as 80%. Second is a new statutory framework for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). This requires new developments to improve a site's 'biodiversity value' by at least 10%, flipping the sector's practises from ones which would tend to be at best neutral, and often detrimental to biodiversity.

These reforms are welcome, but difficult to implement. A survey of homebuilders revealed that 49% are not ready for the FHS to be implemented next year, citing skills gaps and the increased cost of construction. Further uncertainty exists as to whether the government will pursue one of two FHS 'Options', one more wide-ranging with the introduction of wastewater recycling and mandatory solar panels, and a second narrower option which would only require heat pumps and natural ventilation.

On both of these issues, the new Government needs to work to provide the sector with upskilling opportunities to deliver the FHS and BNG in the next 100 days. Clear policy is also needed, for instance in which FHS Option will be pursued and limiting local authorities' ability to diverge from the 10% BNG requirement, and more resourcing is needed for planning departments to enforce and evaluate the new policies.

## Building safety

After the Grenfell Tower fire shocked the world, concrete steps have been introduced to prevent future such failures, including the 2022 Building Safety Act. Its measures include the introduction of mandatory second staircases on 'higher risk buildings' (HRBs) at least 18 metres in height, the creation of a Building Safety Regulator (BSR) to approve HRB designs, and of two new 'competent individuals' responsible for the design and delivery of such buildings: the Principal Designer and Principal Contractor respectively.

Again, many of these reforms are needed, but their implementation is causing difficulties. There is not a clear checklist, for instance, of what skills a 'competent individual' needs, nor of exactly what level of information is required to pass through the Building Safety Regulator's 'gateways'. Lack of resourcing for the Regulator and a long backlog of HRBs is also resulting in delays for approval and a lack of feedback to inform unsuccessful applications.

The new government needs to step in here immediately. A new standard of 'competency' needs designing for the Principal Designer and Contractor roles, and the BSR should issue a checklist of what information is needed at each 'gateway'. Finally, the BSR needs resourcing so that they can provide more feedback to failing applications and clear the backlog of HRBs.

## Where's the money?

Social housing has seen a particularly sharp slow-down of delivery this year, with a 90% drop of affordable housing starts funded by grant in London. This is due to several factors: such as inflation of building materials and the broader construction skills shortage. Social housing providers have also been hit by high costs to deal with building safety issues and address damp & mould in their accommodation – one housing association reported a £105m bill for addressing fire safety issues in the past financial year. Meanwhile, social housing providers are less able to adjust prices to meet these increased costs, and Treasury grants are notoriously inflexible, so it is difficult to adjust projects mid-flight. Business planning has also been difficult, with single-year settlements for social rent after years and looming deadlines of grants like the Affordable Homes Programme.

If Labour is to deliver the "biggest boost to affordable and social housing" promised in its manifesto, money is needed to deliver new affordable homes, and to ensure that existing ones are fit for purpose. Funding from regular grants and social rents should move to longer-term settlements to improve certainty, matched by a similar move in local authority funding.

The housing sector is ready to deliver on the new government's priorities, ramping up delivery and upgrading quality. But, to do this, the government needs to work with the sector in the next 100 days to address their technical challenges after years of disruption, new regulations, and unprecedented demands. The continued engagement with the sector from both Angela Rayner Matthew Pennycook have been welcome, and we look forward to continuing this dialogue as the Labour government progresses.

*Alex is Editor of Red Brick, the official magazine of Labour Housing Group. With past experience at the Institute for Government and the Labour Party, he currently works in the housing sector for cross-industry organisation The Housing Forum.*

# *Fight Political Apathy with Education*

**Bethia Tucker**

Apathy is high and hope is low. Political education should be outlined in a Labour government's first 100 days, in order to subsequently sustain a Labour government that can continue to be pragmatic, and increasingly more radical. While much focus is on vote share, an increased turnout would bolster the mandate of future Labour governments. The 52% turnout at July's general election was a new low since universal suffrage. The IPPR has recommended that in order to increase turnout we must 'cultivate a norm of participating elections.' Political participation must increase in order to combat what Starmer has remarked as the 'snake oil charm of populism.'

Young people are a priority in achieving this. Eighteen to twenty-four year olds from poorer backgrounds, with fewer educational qualifications, are less likely to engage with democratic processes. Labour has promised to give sixteen and seventeen year olds the right to vote in all elections. Ancillary policies are required to encourage young people to use this once it becomes law. In the next 100 days, the government can start to place emphasis on political education in secondary schools, which would help to further legitimise voting rights for sixteen and seventeen year olds in the face of gerrymandering accusations.

Adding politics to the national curriculum has been the obvious choice. Alastair Campbell has advocated for political education to become part of the "everyday debate" in children's entire school experience. The curriculum in Northern Ireland aims for young people to develop as 'contributors to society.' Both these ideas should be considered as starting points for the kind of attitude the government should have towards young people and politics. A 'broader curriculum,' has already been promised and therefore these attitudes should easily be incorporated alongside the increase of subjects such as music and sport which Labour has pledged to include. As political apathy is more prevalent amongst those who don't do well at school, opening up opportunities to study politics and other non-traditional subjects would also increase the likelihood of young people remaining engaged with the education system.

Cynics would argue it's important to bear in mind how politics is expected to be factored into staff stretched thinly, resource scant primaries and secondaries that are still damaged by austerity and Covid. Money should be put aside however, for what can be considered a great investment in combating rising right-wing populism. In the wake of fascist riots, it is clear that political education needs to be outlined urgently and in Labour's next one hundred days in order to put down extremism effectively and sustainably.

Funding commitments to education are costed from the planned £1.5bn annual revenue raised from applying VAT and business rates to private schools to 2028-29. Any potential for increased financial resources should be put towards political education. The very act of taxing private schools and investing in a policy like this places emphasis on the idea that politics is for everybody. The crux of the case for political education in schools is not in the content covered, but the dismantling of a framework that politics is for a privately educated elite.

One way of implementing politics into the curriculum within the next 100 days of the Labour government is citizen's assemblies. While Labour's curriculum review is set to be published in 2025, the setting up of input groups in Labour's next 100 days would enhance the conclusions of this. While the Institute for Government refers to deliberative engagement as a 'mini-public,' we could even imagine this being delivered in schools, under the same name, but referring to children's input and allowing them to feel listened to. This would ensure active engagement in the policy-making process, whilst also opening up opportunities for accountability and policy development within schools, both further education and higher education. 'Mini-publics,' would provide the main lesson of group decision-making to empower young people and ensure they grow up to not only vote but take a wider interest in social issues and Britain's political process.

Therefore, a holistic approach to making children and young people an active part of the policy making process would contribute to a future of reduced hate and a safer pluralistic debate. The pre-existing commitment to reform the curriculum is an opportunity that must be seized in order to achieve this. The paradox that ill-informed adults vote with prejudice while children are completely disenfranchised must be recognised in order to combat right-wing extremism. The clear objective of increased turnout alongside (hopefully) subsequent Labour governments would quieten the claims of the far right and embolden what is currently a silent majority. Being able to articulate frustration over social inequality would end demand for anti-establishment shortcuts and bring about healthier politics. Overall, it is essential that changes made in the next 100 days must consider the electorate of the next 100 years.

*Bethia is a History and Politics student at the University of Cardiff and is Chair of Welsh Labour Students.*

*It is essential that changes made in the next 100 days must consider the electorate of the next 100 years.*

# *Sticking Plasters on a Broken Education System*

**Josie Sawtell-Cousins**

I welcome Keir Starmer's pledge that Labour would introduce voting for 16- and 17-year-olds in Westminster elections. After all, if young people across Britain bear the brunt of political decisions in Westminster, they should at least be allowed a say in what the brunt might look like.

However, for the landmark policy to truly succeed, it must be paired with a school system that promotes Democratic agency. By this, I mean to say schools should actively promote the capacity of individuals to act independently and make their own independent choices, thereby hopefully when they eventually reach a polling station our young people have a solid idea of whom they are voting for and why.

Despite tireless efforts among the Teaching workforce, the simple reality is that the system does not promote democratic agency at present. As Ken Robinson, a world-renowned educationalist highlighted, Schools are becoming increasingly reminiscent of an industrial factory whereby students are essentially a standardised product. Moreover, as Chris Harris, a member of the Fabian Education member policy group noted, the current structures within schools foster only competition and individualism. Ultimately, the restrictive nature of our school structures, whereby success is based exclusively on exam results, serves to detriment any sense of democratic agency among students.

In an attempt to rectify the crisis of democratic agency among young people, political commentators often look to decent citizenship education within schools. This may be true as the Institute for Policy Research highlighted that political education is a pivotal step in restoring faith in politics. However, as my experience in inner-city London secondary schools highlights, extensively focusing on citizenship education within schools may be a plaster to the crisis of democratic agency within our schools, as opposed to addressing its cause. Instead, the Labour Party should seek to reform the structures within our school system. Britain is long overdue for a departure from an era of narrow educational focuses to one that champions creativity.

Creativity, defined by Robinson, is "the process of having original ideas that have value" possesses a myriad of benefits to students, ranging from supporting children's mental health to addressing socioeconomic disparity. Often overlooked, yet perhaps now important more than ever, is the role of creativity in fostering democratic agency among students.

Above all, creativity facilitates the process of original ideas among students, potentially leading to a greater sense of agency in engaging the prevailing with the prevailing political climate. Furthermore, as highlighted by Maggie Nelson, in the context of turbulent politics and ever-rising loneliness, supporting creativity within education is pivotal to fostering a greater sense of belonging and self-esteem, both fundamental aspects of democratic agency. The project 'Understanding Everyday Participation' reinforces this, highlighting the importance of cultural participation in offering connections to others through everyday experiences and meanings. Yet despite well-established research highlighting the role of creativity in fostering democratic agency among students, the Labour Government have inherited an education system starved of creativity. Recent figures note the percentage of pupils taking GCSEs in art subjects has fallen by 50 per cent since 2010, with many schools not offering music GCSE at all. These statistics may seem alarming, yet they are not surprising considering the Conservative

Party's 14-year-long denigration of creative education. Only a month ago, the Conservatives committed to scrap 'Mickey Mouse' courses.

The future is still hopeful. The Labour Government hold a strong mandate for reform within Education, with 411 seats within Parliament to be exact. Early days within the Department of Education are promising, with Bridget Phillipson launching a National Curriculum Review with a key focus on restoring the arts in Education.

The National Curriculum Review is welcomed. However, to truly reform the National Curriculum, the Labour Government must look further than just restoring creative subjects. As Professor Dylan William explained in *Principled Curriculum Design*, interweaving creativity across the curriculum is critical to restoring our school system. Creativity must be used as a "tool for auditing the breadth of the curriculum being offered in each discipline or subject". In doing so, students will be developing their critical thinking, perceptiveness and persistence across the curriculum, thereby promoting a greater sense of democratic agency in engaging with current affairs in the prevailing political climate.

In addition to reviewing and hopefully reforming the National Curriculum, the Labour Government must look at all aspects of the school system. Above all, the Labour Government must seek to promote Arts Participation within our School systems, embedding the arts in extra-curricular offerings and widening access to culture. As highlighted by the Education Endowment Fund, promoting Arts Participation within schools is an effective tool for improving both academic and non-academic attainment among students. Ultimately, increasing investment in Arts Participation within schools will serve to foster a greater sense of belonging and self-esteem. This will not only improve the life chances of our young people but also undoubtedly nurture democratic agency within schools.

What's more, as noted by both James Graham and Alison Cole in the most recent Fabian Review, the Labour Government's commitment to restoring the arts in education must extend further than investment in our school system. Building on the Labour Government's landmark national priority of devolution, I propose an increased commitment to local authorities' arts funding. Alison Cole, director of the arts and creative industries policy unit at the Fabian policy unit proposes a rebuilding of 'Labour's landmark free museum and gallery admission policy' and to 'boost libraries as both cultural and community hubs. In investing in Arts Participation in local authorities, the Labour Government can provide greater opportunities for a sense of belonging and self-esteem within their local communities, further consolidating democratic agency among our young people.

The Labour Government have inherited a School System void of democratic agency. To truly promote democratic agency within our school system, the Labour Government must seek to reform not only our curriculum but also Arts participation across all aspects of our society. After all, if young people in our schools today are the generation of tomorrow, it is about time our school systems allow them to feel a sense of belonging to what today is and the space to explore what might tomorrow look like.

*Josie is a Young Fabian Executive Committee member and a Citizenship teacher in Southeast London.*



# *Redistribution and economic growth by replacing the BBC Licence Fee*

**Peter Warrington**

Taxation is often considered a no-go area for new Labour governments in a first term. But in 2024, this new Labour government has an opportunity to reform an unpopular, regressive poll tax, and reduce the tax burden on working people. It can do this while keeping to both fiscal rules and promises to voters – by replacing the BBC Licence Fee in the next 100 days. Not the abolishment of the BBC, or removing its primary reliance on public funds, but instead focusing on reform towards redistributive taxation in order to fund this institution. I want to make the case based not on emotional ideas of British culture and intellectual enrichment or based on obsolescence or bias, but on practical economic and political reality.

The television licence fee is a poll tax levied across almost all households that consume television programmes whether traditionally or online. Like all poll taxes, it is therefore inherently regressive, resulting in the poor shouldering the heaviest burden while the rich shoulders the lightest, similar to Thatcher's ill-fated 'community charge'. This fee is not an appropriate way to fund a modern public broadcaster. The BBC's role is shifting from solely providing linear TV and Radio to focusing on providing online public services, where the majority of young people now engage with the BBC. Thus, a funding model based on notions of families gathered around TV sets is outdated, unsustainable, and unfairly exacerbates the hardships faced by working families.

When looking at reform of the Licence Fee, any replacement funding model that continues to be based on public funding must be made on the basis of a strong, well-evidenced benefit to wider society. In the UK, the BBC serves as the single largest investor in the creative economy. It commissions tens of thousands of hours for broadcast each year, contributing £4.9bn to the UK economy each year, nearly a billion more than its income from public funds. The BBC is crucial to the UK creative economy. The newly elected Labour government puts economic growth as its highest priority, envisioning public funding as an investment vehicle to rebuild Britain. Therefore, it should continue the basis of a BBC based on public funding as it serves as a charger to the creative economy, in the same way as GB Energy is envisioned for UK energy security.

However, based on the regressive nature of the current Licence Fee and the strong economic case for a publicly funded BBC, I propose a new Public Broadcasting Tax levied on existing income tax bands to replace the Licence Fee, with rates set by a new commission independent of both Government and the BBC. Rates would be set every fixed number of years attached to conditions and targets set upon the BBC in performance of its public purposes which it must fulfil in order to justify its tax income to the commission. These considerations would include how well the corporation serves people across the country, including across income, class, and educational

distributions. The commission would report annually on the corporation's progress in meeting these targets. While existing Ofcom structures would continue to regulate output and standards, the new commission would focus solely on the BBC's financial settlement.

Such a reformed system would transform the funding basis of the BBC away from one dependent on negotiations with Government, which has been used to pressurise the corporation in the past, towards a system that directly incentivises performance towards public purposes.

A redistributive public broadcasting tax model shows how the BBC could be funded to a similar extent as under the current Licence Fee system. This model would yield approximately £3.8bn for the BBC annually, matching existing public funding. This approach would be significantly fairer, with those on lower incomes paying less than the current rate and those on higher incomes paying their proportionate share. This illustrates how this new redistributive model would reduce the unfair burden on working people while ensuring that those with higher incomes contribute more, supporting the growth of the creative economy.

There is also a strong case for bringing international streaming giants within the remit of a Public Broadcasting Tax, these corporations having consistently avoided paying tax in the UK. However, international agreements between the UK and the US mean that the UK cannot impose digital service taxes unilaterally, therefore this is not a realistic or pragmatic proposal in the medium term but should be kept open for future discussion.

Reform through a Public Broadcasting Tax would be in keeping with the new Labour government's fiscal rules and promises on which it was elected. While based on income tax bands, this tax is entirely separate from income tax and set independent of government, while reducing the tax burden for the majority of working people. It is therefore compatible with the Government's promises not to raise taxes (including income tax) on working people, while in pursuit of its missions on kickstarting economic growth and restoring confidence in our intuitions.

This Labour government could begin work in its next 100 days on replacing the regressive BBC Licence Fee and begin to create the independent commission these proposals centre around. To do so would be popular, 64% find the current Licence Fee system unfair according to YouGov, with BBC Director General Tim Davie admitting the need for reform, opening a review of how the system "could be more progressive". This Labour government should take this opportunity, and that of a new administration, to make a difference to working people by continuing in its strong tradition of redistribution and public service reform.



# *Labour's Constitutional Reforms Must Focus on Outcomes*

**Ed Selkirk Ford**

Among the tasks that face the new government, constitutional reform at first seems a second-order issue. Our focus is rightly on the bitter legacy left by the previous government but too often, constitutional reform has been abstracted away from the lives of working people. But constitutional reform can be a deeply practical and pragmatic process by which the state is made to serve the common good.

In its next 100 days, the new government should therefore approach prospects for constitutional reform in light of the urgent crises in housing, health, and the low wage economy. If the government gets it right, constitutional reform can enable radical social and economic change, if it gets it wrong it will find the task before it made more difficult. The government must ensure, therefore, that any proposed constitutional change should be assessed on the basis of its outcomes not merely abstract principles. Constitutional changes that offer more opportunities to fight inequality, boost economic growth, and invest in our public infrastructure and services should be enthusiastically embraced. Changes that construct barriers to action in these areas should be treated with great suspicion.

One area the government seems keen to tackle is the piecemeal systems of devolution in England. Labour's promise for a new 'devolution revolution' promises 'the most ambitious programme of devolution this country has ever seen'. The empowering of local communities is welcome, but this must be done with an eye to the vital practical tasks that the government faces. This means that we should not always assume that movement towards the local is always a positive thing. Many of the crises the government must face are national in character and deserve national solutions. In planning, for example, the severity of the housing crisis and the failure of the existing planning regime to tackle it, has meant that other approaches are needed. The government has rightly introduced new, ambitious and binding housing targets and has committed to driving this development from the centre. Other crises also require the leadership and resources only central government can provide. For example, the slow-burning crisis in adult social care (an area in which local councils take a leading role) can only be addressed by structural change at the English level.

Furthermore, the devolution of powers is worse than useless when local authorities lack the financial security to innovate and expand their responsibilities. Unless funding comes first, empowered local authorities emerge as merely an additional layer of veto, preventing rather than enabling radical change. Even worse, this is a veto in which the voices of the privileged and propertied who have time, money, and expertise to engage effectively in local politics are more likely to dominate.

Instead, the starting point should be what these local authorities can do if they are unleashed from the years of austerity that left them a shadow of their former selves. Rather than devolving more unfunded responsibilities from the centre, the government's priority should be to put local authorities on firm financial footing to give them the space to expand their role. This can be done by re-examining grant systems which were cut to the bone by the coalition government, and moving away from constant competitive bidding which turns

local leaders into supplicants for Treasury favour. Such changes would encourage long-term planning at a regional and local level and enable local government to act as more than a mere agency of national government. More radical changes, such as giving local or regional leaders in England a share of VAT, income tax, and corporation tax, should also be considered.

At the heart of Britain's sluggish economy and poor state of public finances, has been chronic underinvestment. Giving combined authorities and local councils the backing to be proactive in supporting local infrastructure and service growth would be a vital first step in countering this decline. On the other hand, devolving more powers to local councils and combined authorities will be meaningless if the government also cuts investment in regional infrastructure development.

Focussing on the outcomes of constitutional reforms does not mean that we should resist all changes to our constitution. Labour's commitment to votes at 16, for instance, represents a positive move towards enabling radical change. Reducing the voting age exposes young people to the responsibilities of the vote and increases their confidence in the power of parliamentary politics to achieve change. It gives young people who have been particularly disadvantaged by the status quo a stake in politics, and enables elections to be fought on the future, rather than the protection of the economic privileges of wealthier members of older generations.

The government should therefore prioritise, in its next 100 days, those constitutional reforms which are likely to enable wider change. Giving local councils and combined authorities the financial resources to invest in transport, housing, and community over the long-term means we can begin to address regional inequality and sluggish economic growth and encouraging local community pride.

Meanwhile, improving public confidence in, and understanding of, Westminster institutions encourage a sense that government can be a force for good and public support for Labour's agenda.

But we should not be mistaken into thinking that constitutional reforms are a panacea. The failures of government over the last 14 years have not demonstrated the weakness of the constitution so much as that the Tory's small-state conservatism in an outdated and impractical creed. The only way to fix the previous government's legacy, and to prevent a similar disaster reoccurring, is to achieve meaningful reforms of our society and economy and demonstrate the value of a Labour government. The government should remember that constitutional reforms are only as valuable as the politics they enable. Any constitutional changes that serve only to introduce more veto-holders tie the hands of Labour governments to tackle the injustices of our society. Such reforms should therefore be strenuously resisted.

*Ed is a PhD candidate in History at the University of Exeter and a member of the Young Fabians Executive Committee.*

*Labour's constitutional reforms must focus on outcomes*

# *Securing the UK University Sector for the Future*

**Hugo Lebus**

**W**hen I completed my master's degree in 2022, during an academic year heavily impacted by strikes, I witnessed frustration amongst many students and staff at how we had ended up in this situation. This was especially so amongst my international peers, who were paying even higher fees to come to a UK university and in some cases had moved family and left jobs to do so. The UK has some of the top-rated universities in the world and they had come to the UK expecting to experience and access this. The projection of soft power that had drawn such highly trained individuals to the UK was being tainted with disappointment and exasperation as a result of these expectations not being met, owing not just to strikes, but to a raft of other problems that impacted both staff and student experience.

An escalation of financial pressures, job losses, scarce or inadequate housing, and reduced staff and student satisfaction (especially since the pandemic) represent an accumulation of intractable issues causing increasingly serious problems for many UK universities and threatening the very existence of some of them. UK universities contribute significantly to the economy, to the projection of British influence globally, and to the enrichment of our own society. However, for too long, their deterioration has been ignored and swept under the rug to be dealt with during another Parliament. With 40% of universities running budget deficits, the government considering mergers, and falling numbers of applicants at universities across the country, these problems and pressures can no longer be ignored. The new Labour government must deal with this emerging crisis head-on lest we kill this golden goose that has brought so much to the country.

UK universities contribute a vast amount not only to the economic wellbeing of our country, but also to our social, cultural, and literal physical wellbeing. The extraordinary groundbreaking research in Cambridge on the human genome will help millions of people both globally and in the UK as we face increased levels of cancer and other diseases in our young. While civil strife plagues town across the UK, driven by lack of understanding and ignorance of each other, universities can have a special place in inspiring debate and discussion on crucial social issues and in helping to maintain our reputation as a bastion of liberal and tolerant democracy in an increasingly hostile world. Now, halfway through the Olympics, UK universities can be proud of how they have helped many Team GB Olympians to achieve their dreams - current medal table rankings, for example, would place Loughborough University 9th if it were a competing nation. These are just a few examples of the mammoth influence UK universities have on our lives and how they help all of us, irrespective of whether we choose to attend one or not.

There appears to be developing an increasing concern over the numerous problems these institutions are facing. At the same time, the Prime Minister and Chancellor have nailed their colours to the mast with their insistence that increased spending and improved public services can only be delivered if supported by the economic growth that the UK so desperately needs. The new government

cannot hope to accomplish this, especially in a long-term sustainable fashion, without the vast contribution that UK universities make to the economy. Aside from the everyday boost to local GDP that comes from the operation of a university, universities help to bring top talent from around the world to the UK, boost productivity and human capital, spin off countless new ventures and businesses, develop and produce groundbreaking new research, and ensure that the UK remains a top location for investment when compared to our international peers.

With the Conservative government, all too often fond of bashing the UK university sector, finally voted out, the Labour leadership now has a unique opportunity to tackle this issue with a view to the long-term. Labour has not shied away from the need for a comprehensive review of our defence situation, understanding how this is integral to the future of the United Kingdom. In the first 100 days of this new Labour government, a similar approach must be taken to the UK university sector, acknowledging its importance for the strategic goals of the United Kingdom. For this, the UK can draw upon a wealth of globally leading education experts, many of whom will be extremely keen to see the future of these institutions secured.

This review must aim to identify sustainable funding models, taking into account the impact on both universities and students (and their rising debts). Even with the pension dispute resolved, other important concerns for both staff and students, such as increasing student-to-faculty ratios, must still be addressed. It would plan to maintain the sector's worldwide reputation that is currently under threat, whilst engaging with the fear over the sector's growing reliance upon international students' fees as some universities and institutions recruit up to 80% of their students from abroad. Significantly, it would provide a path forward that can secure the continued quality of education that we have come to expect and making sure that a UK degree remains a worthwhile investment for students and government alike. By consulting with students, staff, and stakeholders, the review should be designed to provide actionable recommendations to the new government. The initiative would underscore Labour's commitment to creating a fair, accessible, and high-quality, world-beating higher education system that meets the needs of all students and the broader economy. Leaving the UK universities to deal with these problems, and with no long-term plan for the sector, will inhibit Britain's growth economically, socially, and culturally, and will damage Britain's global image when the new government is seeking to start afresh with so many of our international partners. The Prime Minister, the Chancellor and the new Labour government need our universities, and our universities need them. It's time this critical issue was addressed.

*Hugo is an Education Technology Specialist based in Amsterdam and school governor in Cambridge. He has a background in teaching and is currently the Political Education Officer for Labour International.*





# *Don't Shoot the Messenger! Instead, let's protect those who blow the whistle*

**Maham Saleem**

**I**t was only recently that the Post-Office's appalling conduct towards postmasters, the horror of Lucy Letby's actions in the neonatal unit, and the NHS contaminated blood scandal were leading national stories. What connects the three cases? All three involved people directly involved in the organisations blowing the whistle on individual or company behaviour. Similarly, the Cambridge Analytica and LIBOR scandals or the Uber 'files' wouldn't have hit the newswaves without people in the know disclosing illegal conduct. The whistleblowers involved in high-profile scandals - as well as much more commonly low-profile cases - almost always put their personal safety, their income, and their career at risk to bring information in the public interest to light; more often than not they have tried to complain internally and been dismissed and virtually none do blow the whistle seeking glory, fame or financial reward. Whistleblowers who work in the NHS, in public service or in the private sector are a vital source of information related to public safety or more broadly in societal interest. Removing the obstacles that deter whistleblowers from making public interest disclosures and ensuring they have genuine protection from retaliation is key to a robust and fully-functioning justice system.

## **Who, really, is protected?**

In general, 'blowing the whistle' is when employees can make a disclosure about a health & safety risk, a miscarriage of justice, risk to the environment, a criminal offence, or covering up wrongdoing. As long as the disclosure is internal or to a prescribed person or body, and they reasonably believe the disclosure to be in the public interest, the whistleblower is protected from any retaliation from their employer under the 1998 Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA).

In order to qualify for protection, you'd have to have made the disclosure internally - which, by its very nature, can cause unpleasant interactions with one manager or your wider team - or to a prescribed body. But what if your complaint is simply not in the remit of any regulator? Working out that tax fraud should be disclosed to HMRC is simple, but where would an AI developer who is worried about inaccuracy or bias in one of their firm's algorithmic models be able to make a disclosure? Another issue whistleblowers fall into is if they do file a disclosure with a regulator, they find that most regulators are underfunded, overwhelmed with workload, and with the exception of a few regulators like HMRC, don't see whistleblowing claims as a priority.

MPs & MSPs are also on the prescribed persons list but given the breadth of an MP's duties, it's not surprising that they often have little idea of their responsibilities as a prescribed person. Even in cases where the whistleblower discloses information to a journalist or the media, they have to meet stricter conditions in order to be protected under PIDA.

## **Access to Justice**

Skipping over the fact that PIDA puts employers under no obligation to investigate the claims of wrongdoing, retaliation towards whistleblowers is common. This can range from demotions, dismissals and potentially being blacklisted from their entire industry. Some employers can be fairly aggressive in their retaliation - it was only in 2018 that the CEO of Barclays was fined £1.5mn for hiring an investigator to unmask a Barclays whistleblower.

If whistleblowers feel they have been the victim of retaliation, they can take a claim to court for violation of PIDA. For many this becomes a nightmare. Even though whistleblowers are not made to pay their employer's legal fees if they lose in an employment tribunal, these court cases can still act as a disincentive for people to claim. Even if claimants expect to be successful, there is a chance that their damages won't be much greater than the cost of their legal fees and so there is little point in them enduring the mental anguish of a tribunal for the best part of 2 years. Even when whistleblowers believe they have a solid case, the success rate of PIDA claims is a mere 4%. There is often a huge inequality of arms - whilst large firms are able to pour resources into legal representation, whistleblowers often rely on support from voluntary organisations or represent themselves because of the lack of legal aid.

## **What could be changed?**

The system is begging to be fixed. Labour has a chance to reinforce whistleblower protection in the next 100 days, both to improve business accountability and public safety. Funding legal aid for employment tribunals, or at the very least for PIDA claims, is essential; we cannot be a country of law and order if not everyone can afford the law. Of course given the lack of political appetite for new funding commitments, cost-free changes might prove more popular. In order to remove financial deterrents for claimants, claims under PIDA should be covered under a Qualified One-Way Cost-Shifting regime (QOCS) where, like in personal injury cases, the claimant can have their legal fees paid by their former employer if they win, but not vice versa. Other changes, which would be fairly easy to implement, include widening the scope of PIDA to cover non-executive directors, trustees, and volunteers, and, although contentious, adding journalists to the prescribed persons list. Finally, a Labour government should accept the advantages that come from offering financial rewards in return for disclosures that lead to prosecution. Though it feels un-British to financially incentivise reporting of misconduct, the evidence is fairly clear that it leads to more people coming forward and more successful prosecutions, and directly contributes to a higher penalty revenue for regulators. The last Labour government passed landmark whistleblowing protection legislation in 1998, but 26 years later, it falls to the new Labour government to address its shortcomings.

*Maham is Vice-Chair of the Young Fabians. She studies International, Social, and Public Policy at the LSE and runs a think tank focused on tech policy and innovation.*



# *Overreliance, Britain's Security, and a roadmap to support-oriented Foreign Policy*

**Arshia S. Tabatabaee**

The 'Special Relationship' between the United Kingdom and the United States of America has roots dating back to World War I. Since, Britain and America have coordinated on nearly every large-scale foreign policy decision-making over the past century. But the entry of former President Donald J. Trump into the office of President of the United States has marked a break, as a century of collaboration was broken down into US unilateralism in issues of security across the Middle East and North Africa, and Asia-Pacific regions.

In the Middle East, the US broke down the largest Western nuclear agreement with Iran and followed this by assassinating Qassem Soleimani, sometimes regarded as the second most important man in Iran. Likewise in the Asia-Pacific, America unilaterally began a trade war with China, damaging international supply chains, and creating new rifts between the East and the West.

Ahead of the 2024 Presidential Elections in America, where former President Trump is now seeking re-election, Britain should feel uneasy knowing that the former President will continue with unilateral decision-making, threaten European security by ending aid to Ukraine, and drift from regional allies in the European Union. In its next 100 days, the new Labour Government needs to set out a comprehensive agenda for its foreign policy initiatives, looking to not be interdependent with any state, especially that of America, that could compromise Britain's own security.

Britain's post-war role as a connecting force between Washington and the various European governments has suffered a tarnished image after blindly following the Americans into conflicts such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Now in the 2020s, Britain must accept the financial impact of a wide security apparatus. The Post-2008 economic decline doubled by failed austerity politics in Britain has continued to keep our GDP growth stagnant for the past decades, and as a result, it is structurally difficult for Britain to recreate a military apparatus that it has done in its recent history.

Likewise, our foreign policy in the 2020s has also seen dramatic change from East to West. While previous administrations have looked across the Atlantic to deal with competitors like China, the aftermath of Russia's invasion in Ukraine changed foreign policy needs towards further collaboration with regional, not international, allies on issues of European security. While Britain must always support its democratic allies in the East, especially that of Taiwan, declining operational capacities, shown in Afghanistan, must mean that we need to wary about our active military personnel outside of NATO and wider bilateral European commitments, especially when we are most suited to oppose autocracies closer to home.

It is my belief that Britain's new role in the world that it must create in the next 100 days is that of a support-oriented state. Britain must look to contribute to western security in ways more suited towards our national economy and our international expertise. Britain

has most recently demonstrated its technological prowess in its Japan-UK-Italy Joint Fighter Program where British engineering and science is assisting regional and international partners in improving military technology. Labour must put technology at the heart of a support-oriented foreign policy agenda, utilising Britain's internationally competitive universities and high-tech manufacturing sectors to continue to contribute to allied defence programs. It is part of Britain's social fabric that we have always been innovators, from the radar to the jet engine, and far more that can't be listed. In an era where states such as Russia and China are ramping up technological capacities in the military sector, British defence should focus on returning scientific progress to the heart of all security initiatives, ensuring that British technology can help both homeland security, and the security and defence needs of our allies across the world.

On a similar note, Britain's role as a Five Eyes nation should be used to further expand our top-notch intelligence systems that can continue the safety of British citizens. The miscommunication among NATO in 2021 left thousands stranded as the Taliban took over Kabul and the rest of the country. Improved internal communication networks, increased operations in high-risk zones, and an expansion to intelligence cooperation with the broader NATO community should be at the top of Britain's security priorities. Increasing war and conflict around the world over the past decade not only harms Britain, but also British overseas nationals. A multilateral framework for support-oriented intelligence is a key task that Britain should specialise in within its international commitments and obligations, so that our intelligence community can ensure the safety of British and allied nationals around the world.

Inheriting a worse economic environment than almost any previous Government in modern history, the new Labour Party must continue to show its obligations to the international community, however we must not increase military manpower for its own sake. It is now harder than ever to firmly rely on our Special Relationship to help us circumnavigate international crises. With diverging interests between Europe and Washington, it is more imperative than ever that British foreign policy can be resilient, focused, and aim to help our allies in the fields where we are most suited for, namely technology and intelligence. With a decade of national renewal under the Labour Party, in the next 100 days we must always remember what makes Britain most unique in its security capabilities, and to take a support-oriented foreign policy approach that is suited to us, and in the long-term, can help the West oppose autocracies both at home, and far into the international distance.

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## *Escaping the Fiscal Hole*

**Louis Bush**

When Rachel Reeves MP delivered her first speech as Chancellor, she laid bare the damage left by the Tories and declared that Labour has inherited the worst economic circumstances since the Second World War. Reeves' promise, then and now, has been to make the tough decisions that the Tories are shying away from. Now knowing they also overspent their fiscal reserve, the importance of these tough decisions has only grown.

It's not just part of their broader campaign to restore trust in responsible politics. The Tories failed one of the basic tasks of government: maintaining and improving our public services. This has induced intolerable poverty and prevented Britain from recovering from the 2008 financial crisis and Covid-19 pandemic. Poverty holds back employment and stifles efforts to drive it through the private sector alone. Labour will struggle to grow a green, high-tech economy without first reinvigorating the country's workers and investors.

This is where "tough decisions" come in. At the time of writing, Reeves has accepted the recommendations of the Pay Review Bodies. The party has also launched reviews into social care, benefits, and hospital construction, despite the reflex to push for hasty action. Here, Labour is already showing voters that they will make tough decisions for the public good. Liz Truss' "Mini Budget" is rightly held up to show what happens when politicians fail to do this. I think, however, a better example is the Private Finance Initiative scandal. Using PFI was a no-brainer for past governments. It promised new infrastructure without upfront borrowing. But it also had the upshot of concealing how heavily contracts weighed on their balance sheet. Disputes over maintenance and repair, and rent extraction through exorbitant fees, have left a bill higher than if they had funded and run the projects itself. Osborne's reinvention of the scheme with PF2 only exacerbated this. This all added to the debt which is now (per the fiscal rules) blocking vital investment. Here is a decision that was tough for working people, but not for the politicians making it.

When we call for "tough decisions," we must be clear about what they are in service of. Are they supporting Labour to make economically sound but politically controversial policies? Or are they decisions that justify themselves merely by being seen as tough? I see this as essential to understand why Labour lost my constituency of Bristol Central. Instead of the convenient story of unappeasable single-issue voters who don't care about the economy, we should ask if Labour was being tough in the right ways. The secret behind the Green campaign was the decisions they were willing to make.

Taxing wealth over £10mn, equalising capital gains and income tax, and taking back our critical infrastructure from the private equity firms running it into the ground. These are tough decisions. Tough for Britain's wealthy and tough for the party to communicate versus media backlash. The Greens couldn't deliver on this, but Labour can. And they have the record to prove it.

Of all the past Labour governments to which Starmer's could aspire, the 1945 Attlee government sets the most optimistic example. Rather than submitting to the poverty Britain faced, Attlee embraced the power of the investor-government. His legacy? Over 1 million new homes, the welfare state, and the National Health Service. Reeves has already likened her economic inheritance to Attlee's. She should embrace the solutions that got us out of that mess: ambitious and targeted investment, welfare to support people in and out of work, and a tax regime that ensures those who profit from crisis help pay for the recovery. I believe Liz Kendall MP recognised this when, in July, she linked plans for DWP reform to the blueprint for Labour's welfare state: the Beveridge Report. This callback shouldn't be a one-off gesture.

Labour cannot risk falling into the same motions as their Tory predecessors. Working people quickly learned that many "tough decisions," like cutting spending and investment, were really only tough for them. Nor can Labour let toughness become a goal in of itself. This is a tool to implement policies for the public good, even when it runs against narrow interests. To wield it as proof of ministers' "virility" is a severe mistake. Both pitfalls will not only stifle growth, but also cast doubt on the second term Labour needs to deliver real change.

The next 100 days are Labour's time to embrace the government's role as a driver of economic growth. If 'securonomics' is real, this is what it should be. Starting with the Autumn Budget, Labour can prove to working people that they will not respond to the fiscal hole with more austerity, or the illusion of recovery built on a third try at PFI. Rather, they can offer a Budget inspired by Beveridge, not Osborne. It may be politically painful, but these are the tough decisions the party, not the country, must make. We cannot afford to do anything else.

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## *Fiscal Devolution: An answer to the UK's Stagnant growth?*

**Josh Diebel**

The current UK economy paints a bleak picture. Boasting some of the highest regional inequality in the world, and growth rates have been stagnant for the past 14 years. A highly centralised economy with a 'one-size fits all approach' has created a system in which those regions that align most with treasury orthodoxy and thus receive the most attention thrive, predominantly London and the South East. But those that don't, struggle to provide basic services as funding diminishes. Whilst Labour has no silver bullet to reverse this trend, one of the most transformational tools it has is devolution, specifically fiscal devolution. Local authorities know their local economies best, and many regions in England have the potential to help solve Britain's growth problems if they are given the power to do so. Although this won't alone be enough to solve all of Britain's economic woes, it would present a huge first step in Labour's next 100 days.

Currently local authorities get their funding from main three sources: grants from central government, business rates and council tax. This funding stream however has proved inadequate in encouraging growth across regions with the huge limits it brings on the spending power of these authorities. Funding from grants is completely controlled by central government, and as such has fallen 40% from 2010 to 2019 whilst becoming increasingly complex with the various competitive pots of funding councils can apply for. In many regions only 50% of business rates are kept by local authorities, and the amount of funding raised can vary hugely from region to region (the local tax raising capacity of Westminster was 14 times greater than Lewisham in 2015). Finally, council tax is understood to be a highly regressive tax where often the poorest in the local region can end up being the largest contributors as council tax bands have not been revaluated since 1993, despite house prices jumping by 388%.

This broken and lacklustre funding stream leads to only 23% of spending decisions being made locally according to the centre for progressive policy. Local authorities are unable to make decision for themselves, as they are trapped in a budget nightmare created by Westminster, who demand unattainable goals of growth and providing public services whilst refusing to give regions the necessary autonomy to do so. By extension, this system directly impacts communities and how people feel about their local government.

In his book, *Left Behind*, Paul Collier demonstrates this argument through the cognitive gadget theory. His theory places community at the forefront of how humans learn to think, as the social interactions within a particular community will shape the decisions that people make in their lives. From these interactions, cognitive gadgets are created which can be crucial to prosperity within communities. But when communities start to falter, people within those communities internalise those struggles and spiral into self-blame and 'learnt dependency' – when people lose their faith in their own agency to make change. Trapped in this spiral of decline, communities which start to falter fall further and further into despair.

This spiral into despair is not a set path however. If people's decisions are influenced heavily by their community, then only by fostering positive social habits can struggling communities start to find a way forward. These habits need to come from the communities themselves however. By giving local authorities more autonomy over their spending budgets, giving them the ability to raise their own revenues, this labour government can reverse that feeling of learnt dependency and empower local people to make economic decisions that directly affect them and their communities.

As mentioned before fiscal devolution is not a silver bullet. The OCED has noted that the success of fiscal devolution is country specific, depending very much on the design of the system of fiscal devolution and is usually a long-term project. In this view, it would be wise for a Labour government to begin with fiscal devolution to its 3 major cities as is suggested by the Centre for Cities 2030 economic report. This can act as a trial of sorts for further devolution as different powers can be devolved to each of these cities to infer what will help to unlock economic growth and reduce regional disparities. In terms of funding, the report suggests giving each of the metro mayors of those cities a share of the cities income tax revenue, keeping all business rates, reforming council tax and making grants simpler. This would encourage each mayor to look for opportunities to grow, as higher growth results in higher revenues for spending.

This could be further supported by giving city regions control over key economic leavers, such as transport, unemployment support etc. These proposals not only give local authorities more autonomy in making economic decisions but also gives them more responsibility to reduce inequality within their region.

As with the city of Pittsburgh, who after the collapse its steel industry evolved to become the R&D powerhouse of the state of Pennsylvania, each region in England has the potential to be a part of future UK economic growth. But the city of Pittsburgh achieved its status through a mixture of philanthropy, business investment and most importantly local government autonomy. Empowering communities in the next 100 days to build those cognitive gadgets can help unlock the economic growth that Labour is desperately seeking and pave the way to a more equal economy.

*Josh is a final year student studying PPE at Durham University. He has just completed a year in industry with the Civil Service at DSTL. He has done work experience with a local Labour MP, and written articles for university newspapers and societies, with a keen interest in social and economic inequality.*



# *Starmer and Bringing the Fight to the Far-Right*

Martha Dacombe

The resurgence of far-right ideology in British politics echoes ominous 20th century historical patterns, presenting a critical juncture for the nation's future. The new Labour Government faces a pivotal challenge: to safeguard progressive values against a rising tide of extremism. In his next 100 days, Starmer must address immediate security concerns, but also set a precedent for how liberal democratic societies can respond to extremism without compromising their core values. His response will require treating it for what it is - domestic terrorism.

What we have witnessed over the last weeks are far-right, ideologically motivated race riots that are distinctively political in their intention. These thugs are terrorists, alighting libraries, throwing bricks through family homes, and threatening people of colour. Following a tragic incident where three young girls were fatally stabbed, far-right networks quickly mobilised to disseminate harmful rumours and inaccurate claims, exploiting the shock and grief caused by the attack. Misinformation quickly spread across social media regarding the ethnicity and origin of the attacker, fuelled by individuals like Nigel Farage and Andrew Tate. The far right quickly became digitally organised enough to cause mass mayhem on the streets. Where historically the EDL could be easily recognised as the key culprit of the violence, now, the terror is harder to track to one group, due to decentralised Telegram chats or WhatsApp chats assembling the violence.

The surge of the far right providing 'explanations' to the stabbings provided the fire to the timber among those who feel disenchanted with politics in the UK. They feel the most powerful emotive force in British politics - unfairness. Many towns who experience this unfairness, particularly in the north of England, is where most of the violence has taken place. They most acutely are increasingly infiltrated with radical politics of the far-right. In particular, Reform UK has been electorally rewarded for describing a reality of stalling social mobility. But they reconfigure the working class's rightful frustration with a lack of opportunity, and add in hatred against races and religions, suggesting they are hoarding all the state's interest. In this context, Starmer must address the core drivers of the certain sympathy for the far-right, of anger at a failing economic system. From this moment, he must then challenge the conclusions of the far right, seizing the narrative of immigration, multiculturalism and patriotism.

Additionally, radical far-right politics is also starting to extend its ugly reach beyond class boundaries. The middle classes have and are abandoning the Conservatives and adopting more extreme right-wing politics. Reform UK voters are increasingly home-owners and middle class, a trait which mirrors much of the demographic change of support for the far right in Europe too. For example, in Germany, the surge of support for the AfD can be traced to an increase in support by the middle class, as they abandon the CDU/CSU, with more than half of the AfD's support in 2023 stemming from the middle class. It is this legitimisation of extreme right wing discourse propagated by parties like the AfD and Reform by the middle classes which has laid the groundwork for these riots to be so widespread.

The middle classes have felt the squeeze of social mobility in the last twenty years; with home ownership declining, university degrees declining in value, and the increase in the cost of living. Combined with the ongoing collapse of the Conservative party, this has contributed to a concerning increase of middle classes adopting further right positions. It is more discursively acceptable than ever to hold such extreme views on race relations and immigration. Although middle class people may be clutching their pearls right now, they hold much more in common with those throwing the bricks than they may think.

Unfortunately, terror rather than patriotism or national loyalty has swept Britain. Starmer has the responsibility as a progressive prime minister to develop a British sense of self, rising above the damage of Brexit, divisive Conservative rule and culture wars. Firstly, in the light of the incoherent and racist interpretations of history relied upon to prop up the far right in the UK, Starmer needs to work hard to build a progressive, patriotic history of the UK. He must recognise the horrors of the Empire while building a strong history to claim the future. Claiming the rule of law and the UK's contributions to international human rights, from the Magna Carta to our longstanding parliamentary system can help us build a history to be proud of. Labour ought to engage meaningfully with representatives from POC communities, and religious minorities, to build a more stable progressive coalition and build this vision of history, something they have fallen short on in relation to the hostilities in the Middle East. To be British should be to recognise our troubled history of Empire and integration, but to look to the future with triumphs of long standing British democracy and liberalism behind us.

*To be British should be to recognise our troubled history of Empire and integration, but to look to the future with triumphs of long standing British democracy and liberalism behind us.*

Finally, a period of structural transformation must take place in this Labour Government. Britain must build and reinvest hope in the British state as a positive force for good. The destruction of the rioters ought to be placed in a context in the real deprivation and detonated opportunity, in the context of many of these towns of de-industrialisation, people feel they have nothing to lose. There is the political capital to do so, as many of those involved in the riots do believe the state should provide for them; in providing sure start centres, good schools, and successful infrastructure to bring people closer together. Those disenchanted with British politics and turning to the far right often do so due to their views on cultural issues but are often to the left of those in the wider far-right movements economically.

Starmer must reject the politics of division which have come before him, reclaiming a narrative of national unity. In the next 100 days, there is a unique opportunity for Starmer to stand above these rioters and the years of culture wars which have preceded him.

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*Starmer and bringing the fight to the far-right*

# *Proposals to improve teaching on domestic violence and abuse in schools*

**Isabel Blackburn**

**F**or many students, lessons about relationships in school are awkward, sometimes funny, and occasionally useful. Unfortunately, for those students who are already engaged in unhealthy relationships, a few PSHE lessons a year is not enough to prevent or stop unhealthy relationships. In their election campaign, Labour pledged a trained mental health counsellor would be available in every secondary school. While a necessary step in the right direction to support young people, the Labour government must also develop a strategy to improve education about domestic violence and abuse (DVA) in schools in the next 100 days.

Young people are being failed by an education system that is not educating them about the warning signs of domestic violence and abuse. NSPCC research estimates that 25% of girls and 17% of boys have experienced the use of physical force in relationships and 72% of girls and 51% of boys have experienced emotional violence before the age of 17. Young people experience the highest rates of domestic violence of any age group but are reluctant to discuss their experiences with adults or professionals. These alarming statistics can be explained by influencers who have stylised misogyny as masculinity have become popular amongst teenagers; young people often begin watching pornography years before they begin having their own sexual relationships leading to distorted perceptions of consent and sex; social media has made it easier for victims in unhealthy relationships to be 'checked up on' outside of school or be approached by strangers.

Regardless of the explanation for these statistics, schools should provide their staff and students with the resources necessary to prevent unhealthy relationships. The beginning point for any strategy must be educating young people about the signs of abusive behaviour as many young people struggle to recognise it. A teacher I spoke to for this article said teaching about healthy relationships does not start until Year 11, despite students approaching them with questions about sexual relationships before then. Teenage relationships often begin before the age of 16, and a curriculum must be established that reflects this reality and can educate students throughout their time at school about what healthy relationships looks like. Young people facing abusive relationships keep these incidents to themselves or their peer groups and are reluctant to discuss their experiences with adults. That same teacher I spoke to described how the current process allows any concerns to be reported to the safeguarding team, but if students are afraid of getting themselves or others in trouble this system will not build trusting relationships with students.

## **Proposals**

The curriculum must approach relationships before the age of 16. The school curriculum should introduce concepts such as coercive control before students turn 16, with age-appropriate examples, for example warning students about partners who restrict their access to friends, demand their location, or constantly check up on them. Many young people do not recognise abusive behaviour, beginning prevention early is necessary, particularly where external influences are normalising controlling behaviour for adolescents. The curriculum must also take a gendered approach to the issue; 94% of young people experiencing abuse in intimate relationships are female. The curriculum must recognise that teachers are being asked by young men about sexual practices they've heard 'girls really want'. With the growth in popularity of misogynistic influencers, the curriculum must pre-emptively seek to prevent misogynistic attitudes and behaviours becoming norms in relationships for young people.

There should be a person that students can contact about relationships in every school; whether this is the mental health specialist or a member of staff who wants to undergo training to be able to comfortably discuss relationships with students, students need to feel there is a person who they can ask questions to who won't 'tell them off'. Students in abusive relationships are unlikely to confide in a teacher instantly. Instead, knowing there is a person in school they can gradually open up to may help them to feel comfortable asking questions without being afraid to get themselves or their partner in trouble. Equally, a trained individual may better be able to spot the indicators that a student is engaged in an unhealthy relationship. Giving teachers the ability to refer students to a trained member of staff also helps teachers who may feel unable to discuss sexual relationships with their students.

There is not one solution to the problems young people face regarding relationships, but the government can use the next 100 days to ensure there is a curriculum that tackles the misogyny many students are experiencing and acknowledging that relationships and controlling behaviour can begin before the age of 16. After recognising and designing curriculums to face these issues, designated members of staff can begin to be trusted by students who require advice regarding their potentially harmful relationships.

*Isabel is currently finishing an MSc in Comparative Politics and Conflict Studies at the LSE.*



# *With the collapse of ESG, how should governments address the stagnation in green investing?*

**Adam Hanlon-Jahange**

**E**nvironmental, Social and Governance (ESG) was once a beacon for investors aiming to deploy capital in environmentally and socially beneficial ways. Time is ticking until global temperatures reach catastrophic levels so the collapse of ESG is really something to care about. From its inception, it was the embodiment of stakeholder capitalism and preached a vision of harnessing the power of the private sector to deliver a better tomorrow. ESG is now a shadow of what it once was so the questions arise; how can the new Labour government use its next 100 days to restore ESG and improve directing capital into beneficial areas of the economy?

ESG was a label generally used to denote responsible investment principles and corporate governance. This tended to mean these funds usually underweighted areas such as tobacco, oil and gas or arms production because its investing to 'help rather than to harm'. Hype exploded after the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement with funds clamouring to get across their ESG credentials to everyone: investors, governments, the public, etc. Times are rough for ESG, with many predicting that the acronym will fall out of use. ESG focused funds have suffered a dramatic decline in inflows as investors have slowed the rate in which they allocate capital into them or are withdrawing completely, particularly in the US where ESG has become a battleground of the culture-wars. ESG now has a fraction of the influence it once held but why is this?

In 2022, Putin's invasion of Ukraine, coinciding with the rise in interest rates, harmed flows into ESG funds. The invasion was massively profitable for oil and gas and these market conditions led investors to reallocate capital away from ESG funds, to optimise returns through the unstable economic environment. Importantly, the invasion raised questions on whether the 'rules' made sense, why does a weapons manufacturer who's selling arms to Ukraine, allowing it to defend itself, make a company fall below requirements for ESG funds? If your pension suffers because capital was allocated with societally benefiting intentions but into an ineffectual system where the 'rules' don't make sense, wouldn't you have the right to be annoyed?

The right targeted ESG relentlessly through culture-wars, characterising it as 'corrosive', 'woke-capitalism'. Larry Fink, the CEO of Blackrock and a main architect of ESG now prefers to avoid the phrase after being attacked by the right. ESG is now a trending dirty word, perhaps suggesting rebranding and reform could help detoxify ESG for risk avoiding asset managers. Two key agencies involved in forming ESG ratings are MSCI and S&P and ratings are formed as a measure of financial risk mainly to assist portfolio managers. There is widespread misconception that ESG ratings are a direct measure of a company's virtue, however ratings only tangentially include this which leads to confusion within the industry on why certain investments are made. This rating

has little relevance in measuring a company's virtue so investors falsely believe that ESG is an informational tool to help select virtuous investments. However, there is now a tendency among investors to see oil and gas investments as undervalued and invest in them, even when ESG risk is factored in. It shows that there is insufficient clarity around the information an ESG rating provides. As mentioned before, there are multiple agencies that calculate ESG ratings for investors, however, their unique methods of forming ratings creates even greater confusion amongst investors when ratings can differ vastly. When factoring in that these are commonly thought of as virtue ratings, the current system lacks clarity and structure which prevents investors from accurately assessing ESG impact when allocating capital.

The flaws within the current system that contribute to ESG's overall problem of clarity, hinders it in achieving its overall ambition of redirecting capital flows towards beneficial areas of the economy. It's lack of clarity erodes trust with investors about its positive impact and its complexity exposes it to criticism based on misinformation which then exposes investors to further risk of being caught in the ESG backlash. The more alluring returns of non-ESG based alternatives will weaken ESG's positive impact with less influence over capital allocation across the global economy. For capitalism to fix itself, to prevent further catastrophic harm to the environment, to promote a fairer global economy, the government must create a new system of ESG through legislative assistance in its next 100 days to provide structure, improve clarity and rebuild trust.

Rachael Reeves must separate E,S and G 'virtue' ratings, allowing investors to invest according to their values and increase transparency and entice green investment. However, ratings must be formed in a sufficiently comprehensive way to mitigate greenwashing. In reality, US policy would normally lead such efforts and an international coordination will deliver impactful and necessary reform. However, the Labour government should start the ESG conversation with the financial sector, as a vital first step in building the framework to solving the climate crisis. Reeves had spent much of her time in opposition boasting about her dream for the UK to be the first nation and world leader in driving green and ethical investment, now that Labour is in government, her time to enact this dream has come. The next 100 days, ESG must be reinvigorated in order to both combat the climate crisis and to boost Britain's financial standing abroad, bringing it to its former glory after it had been made a laughing stock by Liz Truss. ESG's revival could pose as the government's silver bullet to bring Britain's finances back in shape.

*Adam is a first-year student at the University of Manchester doing Modern History with Economics (BA). He has interned in an investment fund and with a Labour MP.*











