

# Elections and the Labour Party

*Proposed by the Steering Group*

*Adopted by the All Member Assembly on 24 September 2023*

We do not live in a democratic society. Most of the people who take decisions that affect us, including bosses, landlords, media editors, police chiefs and judges, are unelected and unaccountable.

Elected politicians are in office, but not always in power. Devolved, regional and local governments operate within constraints set by the UK government. The ruling class use their wealth and power to try to dictate policy. We saw this with certain capitalists bringing down Liz Truss. Their attitude to any left government would be far more hostile. Socialism cannot come through parliament, it requires mass struggle in workplaces and communities and the destruction of the capitalist state.

We oppose restrictions on the right to vote, for example by citizenship or ID requirements. We oppose attacks on other elements of democracy and fight for freedom to debate, organise, protest and strike.

In recent UK General Elections, around 30 million people voted. This is roughly half the total population and about two-thirds of eligible voters. Many more working-class people think that elections decide who governs the country than are convinced of the need for revolution. In the period around elections, they dominate the news and shape the terrain on which every struggle takes place. Elections matter.

The Labour Party was formed by the union bureaucracy to give it a voice in parliament and overturn judges' rulings against strikes, most notably the Taff Vale case. While Labour drew most of its support from the working class it was always dominated by the union bureaucracy and middle-class elements and was always a pro-capitalist party. Even in its post-war glory years the Labour Party defended the empire, sent troops to break strikes, and secretly developed Britain's nuclear weapons of mass destruction. In revolutions, workers have to defeat parties like the Labour Party, which play a counter-revolutionary role. In the meantime they provide

a safe channel for discontent and an alternative management team for the British state in periods when the Tories are too discredited.

Despite the nature of the Labour Party, Corbyn raised the hopes of millions and his defeat has been a setback. Starmer positions the Labour Party as a more effective leadership for British capitalism than the Tories. Starmer joins in Tory attacks on migrants and trans people, is even worse on law and order than Labour under Corbyn, plans to stick to Tory spending plans, is pro-imperialist and has retreated from already inadequate positions on climate and workers' rights. Starmer has crushed the legacy of Corbynism, with most socialists driven out of the Labour Party by one means or another. There is no prospect of the left regaining leadership of the Labour Party. Socialists should organise outside the Labour Party.

Britain is in the midst of a serious social crisis. Workers are desperate for things to improve, but many doubt that any existing political parties have an answer. We stand with those who want to see the end of Tory rule. It would be a step forward if the electorate voted out the open champions of wealth and privilege. Within the confines of the election, a Labour victory is the most likely way this will happen. If they have an overall majority this will make it harder for them to avoid responsibility for their failures. We reject calls for a 'progressive alliance' that mean voting for parties like the Liberal Democrats who collude with the Tories and giving up on any attempt to build working-class representation. Labour, for all its faults, is not the same as the Lib Dems - it still has links with the unions and mass, if decreasingly loyal, working-class support.

Though it is unlikely to bring any meaningful reforms, the SNP has more support than any other party in Scotland. Yousaf has hinted that an SNP win will be a mandate for outright independence (in contrast to Sturgeon's declaration that an SNP win would mandate another referendum). If that's the case, 2024 could be an opportunity to revive arguments for a radical independence. The SNP makes the biggest promises and only through their electoral success has it become clear that they drag their feet on every issue. Being for Scottish independence, our project is

not to mobilise SNP votes, but to provide an analysis and ideas for action that contribute to building class confidence whatever the result of the election.

It seems likely there will be organised left challenges in several areas and we should support these. Revolutionaries should help where there are campaigns from the left - this is qualitatively different to left groups standing paper candidates. We should encourage these local initiatives to coordinate and support serious moves towards organisation which can mount a wider challenge in future elections. We are unlikely to win the majority of the working class to revolution without them experiencing the inability of a left government to deliver the change we need. The First Past The Post electoral system is a barrier to the development of left alternatives to Labour and we support moves to replace it with something better.

It seems likely that the Tories will lose, whether or not Labour wins a majority. The current social crisis holds opportunities for both the far left and far right. Currently, however, the far right has already gained support for scapegoating migrants and trans people, has media support for its ideas and is part of well-funded international networks. The risk is that disappointment with a Labour government will provide fertile ground for them to grow further. Labour won't deliver for working-class people. We need to ensure that the main challenge comes from the left, rather than the far right.

Instead of focusing on arguments about whether to vote or who to vote for, we aim to build resistance, ensure it develops beyond the next election, make radical interventions on the issues defining the election, and build a socialist alternative to Labour and the SNP. Our position in general is not to actively campaign for a Labour vote. Looking beyond the election, we aim to pull together coalitions that could then turn to fighting a Labour government under Starmer.