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ZONE THINGS THE WAY THE DO YOU THINK THINGS COULD BE BETTER



Introduction

LEFT UNITY IS a new political party founded because the main parties all support the policies they call 'austerity': deep cuts in public spending designed to destroy the social and economic gains working people have made over many decades.

We are being forced to pay the costs of a crisis we were not responsible for, while the wealthiest 1% continue to rake in bonuses and fill their bank accounts in tax havens.

We are committed to defending and expanding the welfare state, and defending all those worst affected by this onslaught and the scapegoating and racism that come with it. We advance alternative social and economic policies based on supporting public services and redistributing wealth.

DIFFERENT ECONOMY, DIFFERENT SOCIETY

THE SO-CALLED economic recovery is only a recovery for the few. Average real wages are still at least 6% below their level in 2008 with the average worker $\pounds1,500$ a year worse off.

One in five working people is not paid a living wage, and the number of zero-hours contracts has shot up by 75% in two years. Many disabled people face up to six different benefit cuts, losing up to £5,000 a year. Cuts in the public sector continue, disproportionately hurting women, children, LGBTQ people, people from ethnic minorities and some of the poorest regions in the country.

We are suffering more widely from the consequences of 30 years of what is known as 'neoliberalism' – the privatisation of publicly owned services and utilities, the deregulation of markets and a sustained onslaught on the gains won by the labour movement after 1945.

Radical measures are necessary to ensure a transformation in the economic structure and a reversal of this damage. We believe that there is no longer any prospect of the Labour Party being prepared to do this as it has embraced neoliberalism and austerity. Our goal is to transform society: to achieve the full democratisation of state and political institutions, society and the economy, by and for the people.

SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, ENVIRONMENTALIST, ANTI-RACIST

LEFT UNITY STANDS for equality and justice. It is socialist, feminist, environmentalist, anti-racist and against all forms of discrimination.

WE ARE SOCIALIST because our aim is to end capitalism. We will pursue a society where the meeting of human needs is paramount, not one which is driven by the quest for private profit and the enrichment of a few. We are in favour of a radical system where democratic control extends across the economy. The natural wealth, and the means of production, distribution and exchange should be owned in common and democratically run by and for the people as a whole, rather than being owned and controlled by a small minority to enrich themselves.

WE ARE FEMINIST because our vision of society is one without the gender oppression and exploitation which blights the lives of women and girls and makes full human emancipation impossible.

WE ARE ENVIRONMENTALIST because we recognise that if humankind is to survive, it has to establish a sustainable relationship with the rest of the natural world – an economy based on achieving maximum profits in the shortest possible time is destroying our planet.

WE ARE ANTI-RACIST and opposed to all forms of discrimination. The current economic onslaught disproportionately affects already disadvantaged groups and we oppose their persecution and oppression. No society is just and equal while some people remain without the support needed to achieve their full potential.

Our policies are made by our members. They are emerging from democratic debate and will develop further over the next few years.

HERE ARE SOME OF THE POLICIES WE STAND FOR:

WE ARE FOR policies to restore full employment, an immediate £10 an hour minimum wage and spending on public housing – we are against austerity, which makes us pay for a systemic crisis of capitalism.

WE ARE FOR free, publicly owned, democratic public services as well as

the public ownership of utilities, transport and banks – we are against the creeping privatisation of the NHS and education.

WE ARE FOR a welfare system based on the principle of universal benefits, and cutting taxes for working class people while raising them on the richest people and corporations – we are for the abolition of sanctions, workfare and work capability assessments and against cuts in social security benefits.

WE ARE FOR an internationalist policy based on peace and equality, and for the right of people to determine their own future – we are against imperialist wars and military intervention.

WE ARE FOR a radical social transformation drawing on the best of the cooperative, radical democratic, feminist, green and socialist traditions – we are against a system whose benefits go disproportionately to 1% of the population.

BEYOND ELECTIONS

LEFT UNITY ENGAGES in elections to offer voters a left alternative, but we understand that elections are not the only arena or even the most important arena in which political struggles are fought.

We recognise that support for our party and its electoral success will only advance to the extent that it is genuinely representative of working class communities, and an organic part of the campaigns and movements they generate and support. We will not vote for cuts or compromise our principles by participating in coalitions with capitalist parties.

Elsewhere in Europe left parties such as Syriza in Greece are winning mass support for resistance to austerity. In Britain we believe we too need a new left party, and that is why Left Unity exists – we hope you will support us and get involved.



The Economy

LEFT UNITY CALLS for an immediate end to austerity and a reversal of the cuts in public spending imposed by the Conservative-led government.

We need an economy run democratically, not controlled by the few in the interests of 1% of the population. This means the principle of common ownership of all natural resources and means of producing wealth, and an end to the dominance of private financial interests such as the City of London over the economy. We stand for 'from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs'.

FULL EMPLOYMENT

FULL EMPLOYMENT, AS existed in the post-war period up until the 1970s, should be a primary objective for any left government. We would achieve full employment for all those below retirement age on the basis of a 35 hour week, with no loss of income from any reduction in hours.

We are for up to a million 'climate jobs' – a massive investment in renewable energy, improved housing, public transport and sustainable technology (see Environment). We also want more 'purple jobs': jobs in the caring sector in support of all those in need. We would introduce free childcare provision for all pre-school age children and re-instate children's centre services in all areas where they have been closed.

Left Unity would impose a ban on all zero-hours contracts, converting existing ones to proper contracts.

PUBLIC OWNERSHIP

WE STAND FOR new forms of public ownership, socialisation and cooperative ways of running businesses and the economy. We are for public ownership of the banking system, as well as all essential public utilities including transport, telecoms, energy and water companies, and the supermarkets. However we are not for running these in the old top-down way. We support new forms of governance for all these institutions involving representatives of the workforce and local communities – and a cap on top rates of pay at no more than three times the average wage.

The privatised companies have raised prices faster than inflation, made huge profits and still neglected investment in essential infrastructure. We would, for example, combine and socialise the energy companies into one democratically controlled institution to reduce energy costs immediately.

TAX THE CORPORATIONS

WE WOULD PAY for investment in our future with effective taxation on corporations and the richest in society, while making the tax system as a whole much more progressive.

This will require reversing corporate tax cuts, bringing back a 40% rate for large companies, but cutting rates for small businesses. We would reinstate a 50% tax rate for those on over £75,000 a year while scrapping income tax for those earning less than £20,000.

Left Unity would crack down on tax havens and tax avoidance by the rich. All money earned by individuals in Britain will be taxed in Britain.

We need a tax on financial transactions across the European Union (sometimes known as a Robin Hood Tax), as well as a wealth tax and an inheritance tax rising to 90% on all assets worth 100 times the average estate, and a land value tax collected centrally and redistributed to local authorities according to need as a replacement for council tax. We would scrap VAT because it is a tax that hits the poorest people when they are buying essential goods.

A LIVING WAGE FOR ALL

WE ARE SEEING a recovery for the few not the many. Real wages (after inflation) have fallen for the majority in work. Meanwhile bankers' bonuses and executive pay are going up again.

We call for an immediate £10 an hour minimum wage for all, which should be strictly enforced and adjusted regularly in line with inflation and housing costs in areas such as London.

TAKE OVER THE BANKS

WE CALL FOR all major British financial institutions to be brought under public control. The financial crash of 2008 led to the government taking over banks such as RBS and Lloyds – but running them as before.

Taxpayers have lost billions yet bonuses continue to be paid to executives who led us to the brink of economic collapse. This has to end: publicly controlled banks would scrap the bonus culture completely, and direct bank lending to socially desirable forms of investment and cooperatives, not buy-to-let landlords and speculators.

THE TRADE UNIONS

WORKERS MUST BE allowed the democratic right to stand up for themselves. Left Unity would repeal all the anti-union laws, which restrict workers' rights to organise in defence of their wages and conditions. These laws, passed by the Tories between 1980 and 1994 and kept in place by Labour, give unelected judges sweeping powers to stop strikes and ban solidarity action.

We support calls for a charter of trade union rights, including an unrestricted right to strike.

1 May, International Workers' Day, should be a public holiday.



Health

WE WANT TO defend and improve our National Health Service. Every part of the NHS should be defended as a publicly run, publicly owned system providing free care. Access should be universal and equitable – market forces have no place in healthcare.

We would repeal the Health and Social Care Act to restore the NHS as a publicly delivered, publicly funded and publicly accountable healthcare system. We also support attempts to pass an NHS Reinstatement Bill into law.

END THE NHS CUTS

HEALTHCARE PROVISION AND planning, including staff to patient ratios and bed numbers, should be based on evidence and outcomes – and excellence should be the norm.

There must be an immediate moratorium on A&E and hospital closures. Any reconfigurations must be clinically, not financially driven and must show they have won public and professional support for alternative, improved services.

The NHS should be funded through taxation, and borrowing where necessary, according to the level of social need. We will reverse the decline in real wages of health service workers and protect whistleblowers.

Mental health services have been shamefully neglected over decades and need to be expanded and integrated into the broader NHS. There should also be a focus on workplace health, public health and social care.

NO PROFIT IN HEALTHCARE

ABOLISH THE Private Finance Initiative (PFI) introduced by Labour and cancel the PFI debts. Reduce the Department of Health's reliance on expensive external management consultants. We are also opposed to the

TTIP trade deal (see International), which would further open up the NHS to the market.

We need to work towards a single integrated NHS, which would eliminate the internal market (the so-called 'purchaser/provider split'). The NHS could then use its huge purchasing power to reduce costs of drugs, equipment and supplies.

Health research is essential but the private pharmaceutical industry exploits patients and the NHS. Left Unity would restrict its powers, and ultimately replace it with a non-profit system of pharmaceutical production. The money wasted on private profit and bidding processes could be used to expand the total amount of drug research.

Weaknesses of the original NHS include poor democratic accountability and separate arrangements for GPs leaving them free to pursue private practice. We need a modern system in which employees, councillors, patients and carers are represented on all appropriate health bodies and where clinical need rather than cost and 'balancing the books' determine priorities.

BETTER SOCIETY FOR BETTER HEALTH

HEALTHCARE IS ONLY one part of health: it is just as important to stop people becoming ill in the first place – and poverty is a huge cause of illness.

Policies such as improved social housing, access to good education, healthy food and a healthy environment will help prevent ill health. Every step that reduces inequality has been shown to improve the health of all parts of society.

Housing

THE HOUSING CRISIS in Britain is getting worse. In London house prices are soaring again making it impossible for most workers to buy their own home. In the private sector rents are exorbitant and tenants forced to accept short-term lets with no security. Yet in other areas houses lie empty and people cannot sell their homes.

Across the country there is a chronic shortage of social housing and a rise in homelessness while landlords and property developers profit from the crisis.

PUBLIC HOUSING

LEFT UNITY CALLS for a massive expansion of the publicly owned and democratically controlled housing sector, and for social housing to be allocated according to need.

New council or social housing building programmes can be funded by government at very low interest rates. We will end the 'right to buy'. Renovation of the existing housing stock to make it energy-efficient and sustainable lies at the heart of our programme of green investment.

A new publicly owned building corporation should be set up employing workers on permanent contracts to implement this.

RENT CONTROLS AND BETTER STANDARDS

LEFT UNITY WOULD reintroduce rent controls and security of tenure as used to exist in Britain and still exist in parts of the European Union such as Germany, and support the creation of tenants' cooperatives to run estates.

Local authorities should be given new powers of inspection and regulation of private rentals to ensure they are up to standard.

We campaign for accommodation in genuinely affordable housing for all and would take measures to assist and protect from eviction those

NO EVICTIONS, NO HOMELESSNESS

WE SUPPORT THE campaigns to abolish the bedroom tax and in support of tenants fighting the threat of mass eviction and social cleansing, driving people out of inner city areas.

We would reverse cuts in emergency accommodation for homeless people and maintain housing rights and benefits for the under-25s that are under threat from the government.

Left Unity would also use compulsory purchase powers to take over vacant accommodation, and legalise the squatting of empty property.

Migration

MIGRANTS, REFUGEES AND asylum seekers face a sustained campaign of vilification from all the main political parties, cheered on by the right-wing media's scare stories. Labour and the Tories have reacted to the rise of UKIP by competing with each other over their anti-immigration rhetoric.

Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers have had their rights to benefits, housing, health, work, and legal representation removed or restricted. They face raids at home, in places of employment, at cafes and social events. An ever-widening number of professionals are expected to act as 'immigration spies', legally obliged to check the immigration status of their clients.

A STRONG PRO-MIGRANT VOICE

LIKE ON SO many other issues there is simply no pro-migration, anti-racist voice in party politics shaping the agenda. Left Unity wants to be that voice: we completely reject all anti-immigration arguments and rhetoric.

Capitalism does not provide jobs for all those able and willing to work. This has nothing to do with immigration but is entirely based on the 'artificial scarcity' capitalism creates when there are more people looking for work than can be profitably employed. Shortages of housing and public services are also not migrants' fault: they should be solved by investment in those services.

We believe mass migration has had an overwhelmingly positive impact on society. It brings experiences of global struggles, opens up new and exciting avenues for cultural and artistic change and helps break down racist myths and stereotypes.

We recognise and respect the extraordinary sacrifices that people have made and continue to make to come to Britain, and we unreservedly defend their right to stay, to bring their families, and to build a new life for themselves.

DEFEND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

WE BELIEVE THAT it is in the interests of the working class as a whole, migrant and non-migrant, in Britain and internationally, to have equal rights to move across borders. We defend freedom of movement, including the existing EU rights on this issue.

Immigration controls divide and weaken the working class and are therefore against the interests of all workers. There can be no 'fair' or 'nonracist' immigration controls.

In Britain we enjoy freedoms to move and work overseas that should not be denied to others. Meanwhile the global super-rich enjoy near total freedom of movement across the world's borders that is denied to the poor and marginalised. The current large-scale movement of people is caused by war, poverty and environmental disasters.

We are opposed to all laws which make people illegal because of who they are, where they or their parents were born, the colour of their skin or what language they speak. Existing 'illegal' immigrants should be given amnesty to stay, work and pay taxes so they can contribute to the economy. We oppose deportations and welcome people fleeing war and poverty.

Close down all immigration detention centres like Yarl's Wood and Harmondsworth. We are for the prosecution of all immigration or security officers involved in physical and sexual assaults on those detained or the murder of deportees.





Equality

LEFT UNITY SUPPORTS equality and human rights for everyone. We are committed to fighting discrimination, all forms of oppression and unfair treatment. We will work towards an inclusive society with social, political and economic equality for all.

We are a party which is feminist and enables members to set up caucuses (groups) to encourage the self-organisation of members who experience specific discrimination to enable them to have a collective voice within Left Unity. There are caucuses for: LGBTQ members, black and minority ethnic members, disabled members, women members and young members.

DISABLED PEOPLE

LEFT UNITY ACKNOWLEDGES that disability is the result of the social oppression of people with physical and/or intellectual impairments, and people with severe emotional distress. Left Unity is committed to involving disabled people in all areas of policy, practice and decision-making, and learning from their experience.

The Work Capability Assessment (WCA) has been misused to force disabled people off benefits and has caused distress and poverty. It is unfit for purpose and must be scrapped (see Social Security) – the results will be the same whether ATOS runs it or any other contractor. Disabled people should be supported to work but never penalised by the benefits system.

Other benefit cuts, justified using unfair media attacks on benefit claimants, are having a disproportionate effect on disabled people. The Independent Living Fund and Disability Living Allowance should be reinstated – these are vital benefits for basic day-to-day life.

As a party Left Unity supports disabled people's campaigns and aims to be accessible to all.

ANTI-RACISM

LEFT UNITY IS committed to fighting racism. There has been a dangerous upsurge in racism in Britain over the past ten years, resulting in attacks and death of people from black and minority ethnic communities. There has been a rise in antisemitism and media myths have fuelled Islamophobia.

We challenge other parties' racist scapegoating. The mainstream parties, working through the state, have entrenched repressive policies such as greater surveillance and policing of Muslims, harsher controls of asylum and immigration and stop and search policies mostly affecting black youth. Left Unity opposes these and supports freedom of movement for migrants (see Migration).

A new party of the left worthy of the name must go on a general offensive against racism and support a new generation of grassroots black-led campaigns. Working class people, of whatever background, have a shared interest in defeating the racists. Our candidates will make it a priority to challenge the other parties by putting forward the principles of anti-racism.

WOMEN

LEFT UNITY IS a feminist party because our vision of society is one without the gender oppression and exploitation which blights the lives of women and girls and makes full human emancipation impossible. We specify our feminism because historical experience shows that the full liberation of women does not automatically follow the reordering of the economy.

Today the brutal paring down of public services and welfare, whether it affects housing, healthcare, labour rights or council services, affects women more than others.

As long as women are the ones primarily responsible for childcare and housework in the private home this acts to restrict their equal participation (and payment) at work and their access to jobs, social and political life. To combat this we demand free crèches and nursery schools, available for both day and shift workers, maternity/paternity leave with no loss of pay or seniority, and affirmative action wherever women are under-represented in the workforce or in certain grades.

Domestic violence and rape often go undetected and unpunished. Women, abused within the family home, often have nowhere to seek refuge for themselves or their children, with no independent source of income – a situation made worse by severe cuts to rape crisis centres and women's aid.

Women's control over their bodies is a fundamental human right. We unequivocally support women accessing their reproductive rights and their right to medical care when they do so. We oppose any attempt to prevent women from accessing their reproductive rights and we oppose any attempt to limit that access to abortion and contraception, either legally or legislatively.

We oppose gender stereotyping and we do not believe that roles in society should be determined by gender.

Young women are being subjected to unprecedented levels of sexual bullying. Inclusive age-appropriate sex and relationship education should be delivered by specially trained teachers to children and young people throughout their time in schools and colleges. This needs to address the objectification of women and girls.

The majority of women claiming asylum are survivors of sexual violence – we fight to defend specialist services. Women claiming asylum must not be separated from their friends, families and communities. We are unequivocally opposed to female genital mutilation.

Despite important changes brought about by women activists and male supporters within the labour movement we still need to combat sexism there, including within socialist organisations. Women must have the right to caucus (ie. meet on their own) to criticise sexist behaviour or discrimination, to educate and encourage one another to play a fuller part in the unions, parties etc, and to empower themselves to take on leadership roles at every level.

As part of our commitment to gender equality, at least 50% of those elected to all positions in Left Unity must be women.

LGBTQ

THE LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or queer) community in Britain has been badly affected by the cuts, not least because they are disproportionately employed in the public sector. Many young LGBTQ people still have to leave home because of homophobia or transphobia, and are increasingly homeless and jobless.

Left Unity's policies, particularly on housing, respect the needs and

struggles of LGBTQ people. In the face of rising homelessness and 'sofa surfing' by LGBTQ youth because of cuts in emergency accommodation and refuges, we say no one should ever have to sleep on the streets or sofa surf (see Housing).

Hate crime against LGBTQ people is still commonplace in our society. One in five lesbian and gay people have experienced a hate crime in the last three years and it is estimated that 90% of hate crime is unreported. Left Unity will be a voice against all aspects of prejudice against LGBTQ people, which despite recent legal improvements is still rampant and institutionalised, especially in schools. We oppose cuts to HIV and sexual health services.

YOUNG PEOPLE

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE discriminated against in our society. They are paid less and unemployment is double the rate of adults. Now further and higher education is saddling thousands with debt because of the tripling in university fees and scrapping of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

There must be massive investment in schools and colleges (see Education), but being young is about more than education. We support more free sports clubs and gyms, places where young people can make art, film or music, where youth can bring out their full creativity and have fun. It is important that they decide for themselves how their services are run.

When some people talk about 'anti-social behaviour', our answer is to enrich the life of the young, not to demonise them in the media as 'chavs' and 'hoodies' or inflict police repression on them through stop and search laws and Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBOs).







Environment

OUR PARTY IS both green and red. We recognise both the inherent instability and brutality of capitalism and the limits to our ecosystem – that our planet's resources are finite and that the ecological balance that makes all life possible on it is fragile and under threat.

Today, humanity faces the unprecedented threat of an ever worsening series of catastrophes, caused by the interlocked economic and environmental crises brought about by our current economic system. It is now clear that an increase in global average temperature of several degrees means that 50% or more of all species – plants and animals – will be driven to extinction.

Ecological devastation, resulting from the insatiable need to increase profits, is not an accidental feature of capitalism: it is built into the system's DNA and cannot be reformed away. International policies like carbon 'cap and trade' that allow companies to buy the 'rights' to pollute, or an ecotax that ends up punishing the poor, are all measures that will not work in the long term to save the planet – instead giving the rich and powerful nations and individuals the right to continue to pollute legally.

RENEWABLES NOT FRACKING

SOLUTIONS ARE AVAILABLE and affordable, but time is short. We must urgently implement policies that reduce greenhouse gas emission levels by at least 90% of 1990 levels by 2050.

We are in favour of a massive and planned shift away from fossil fuels towards renewable energy production – for a huge expansion of wind, wave, tidal and solar based energy generation.

We are against any plans for fracking, with its potential for triggering earth tremors, polluting water supplies and causing massive damage and disruption to local environments and communities, or any other unconventional oil, gas or coal extraction methods. We also oppose a new generation of nuclear power stations.

REDUCE ENERGY USE

IT IS POSSIBLE for us to dramatically reduce our energy demands through the energy-efficiency retrofitting of homes, offices and industrial premises, and by improving transport systems. We need an energy conservation strategy involving a massive infrastructural investment and reconstruction programme to make all existing homes and workplaces energy efficient. Such a programme has been proposed in the pamphlet One Million Climate Jobs and we fully endorse its proposals.

Transport accounts for 24% of our greenhouse gas emissions and demand is predicted to continue to grow. But simply providing for anticipated demand is wasteful, damaging and unsustainable. A publicly owned and democratically controlled public transport system would not only be able to integrate its various transport modes into a seamless service but would be able to experiment with new and more environmentally benign transport solutions.

Agribusiness, concentrated into fewer and fewer hands, pollutes air, water, and soil, reduces biodiversity, and contributes to global climate change. Nowhere in Britain is power more concentrated than in the countryside. It is estimated that almost 69% of the land is owned by 0.6% of the population. We advocate the imposition of a limit to the area of land any private individual or commercial company can own and the expansion of public and social land ownership.

END FUEL POVERTY

FUEL POVERTY IS a major social crisis in the UK. There are over five million households in fuel poverty – needing to spend more than 10% of their income on energy in order to keep warm. We are for the public ownership of the public utilities: water, electricity and gas.

Under the current pricing system, the more energy you use, the cheaper it gets. This means that those with the lowest incomes pay the most for their energy, because they use the least, while the luxury consumption of the rich is subsidised by the rest of us. A fair pricing system would reverse this, making the first units of energy used cheap or even free, with prices increasing as usage grows.

Some climate change is now inevitable, the question is how much and for how long and how much damage will it do. For us, socialism is the best way to manage the resources of the planet and ensure their democratic distribution in such a way that we are not destroying the environment to make a profit – as the corporations and energy companies are.

GM

IN PRINCIPLE, GENETIC modification of plants (GM), a very powerful though potentially very dangerous technology, could play a useful role in developing more productive plant strains that are resistant to particular pests and diseases, more drought resistant or which require no artificial fertiliser. However, the big agrochemical companies like Monsanto, DuPont and Dow are more interested in using the technology to make farmers around the world dependent on their other products – fertilisers, insecticides and herbicides.

Therefore, while we support continuing research in genetic engineering, we also support a moratorium on the use of genetically modified organisms in commercial agriculture.

ANIMAL WELFARE

FACTORY FARMING IS a major cause of cruelty to animals. It is also the cause of significant harm to human health, to the environment and to communities throughout the world. Factory farming must be abolished and caring, sustainable farming methods put in its place.

We would abolish cruel factory farming systems such as cages and crates, stop feeding farm animals human-edible crops and stop the routine use of antibiotics on farm animals to prevent diseases that are caused by crowded and stressful conditions.

We would keep the ban on fox hunting and put an end to the badger culls.



Education

EDUCATION IS UNDER threat internationally from the values and practices of free market capitalism, which pits school against school, parent against parent, the wealthy against the poor, and child against child, all under the myth of 'choice'.

The choice only really applies to some families and is linked to the idea of league tables and 'winners and losers'. League tables have forced schools to concentrate on examination results or risk take-over or closure. We don't want any people to be considered losers in our education system. The mirror of 'competition' distorts the real purpose of education.

EDUCATION IS A RIGHT

EDUCATION IS A fundamental human right. It empowers and informs individuals and allows them to develop to their full potential. It is also a source of creativity, innovation, understanding, discovery and design that are of immeasurable value to society as a whole. It is therefore a prerequisite for any genuinely democratic society.

In order to bring this vision into practice we support the principle of lifelong learning: that learning and the development of understanding is a process that takes place throughout life to the benefit of the individual and society at large.

There should be full or part-time state nursery school education up to the age of 6 with emphasis on play-based learning and outdoor activities. All schools will be inclusive, and progressive teaching methods will be evaluated and encouraged – and all young people will be entitled to free, inclusive field trips and school journeys.

NO TO ACADEMIES AND FREE SCHOOLS

ALL ACADEMY AND free school funding agreements will be rescinded. Academies and free schools, removed from the control of private organisations, will be fully integrated within a single, statutory model of school governance, and funded by local authorities according to a national formula.

Left Unity would end the charitable status of fee-paying schools, and also withdraw state funding from schools or colleges which exclusively promote any one religious belief system, including Christianity, unless such establishments have an open, secular enrolment policy.

BETTER CONDITIONS FOR SCHOOL STAFF AND STUDENTS

RATHER THAN ATTACKING teachers' pay and conditions as other parties do, Left Unity wants to support teachers. Their pay will be determined through national negotiations and not on a 'performance' basis. We support equal pay and conditions of service across the entire spectrum of teaching institutions including the chronically underpaid sector of early years. We will end the exploitation of teaching assistants.

We will preserve and improve the public sector pension schemes which apply to permanent and supply teachers and support staff, and return to locally funded supply pools of teachers.

Students and teachers are far too stressed by regular examinations. We propose to end constant assessment, testing and grading of students, replace the national curriculum with an advisory core curriculum, and bring in a nationally agreed set of assessment tools that move beyond booklet examinations and give all students and teachers a range of ways to express their progress.

We will provide free and healthy school meals for all pupils.

SCRAP ALL STUDENT FEES

STATE EDUCATION NEEDS to be funded and free at the point of use, all the way from nurseries to university level.

All students would be guaranteed up to six years free further and higher education – and this would include a living grant.

Crime & Justice

THE CURRENT APPROACH to tackling crime in Britain is wrong. Politicians think it is a vote winner to appear 'tough on crime' while ignoring many of the causes of crime: poverty, social alienation and systematic discrimination.

The collateral damage of the criminal justice process is also profound. A criminal record is a life sentence for many: an ongoing obstacle to participation in work and the wider community. Families and communities whose loved ones are arrested, prosecuted, imprisoned and supervised experience deep and lasting loss. Collateral damage is also found in the stress experienced by many victims of crime, whose traumas and distress are often left unresolved, and in the dissatisfaction of witnesses, whose experience of the criminal justice process can be so negative.

Criminal justice also crowds out other, more innovative, just and effective policy and practice solutions to the problems our society faces. It is good at punishing certain individuals and groups. It fails to prevent social problems from arising, or to resolve those that occur.

A BETTER SOCIETY NOT PUNISHMENT

TOO MANY PEOPLE are in prison, too many people suffer injustice or have their lives destroyed by a system that is geared towards punishment rather than rehabilitation. Instead of this socially damaging approach, Left Unity will fight the causes of crime, eradicating poverty, increasing opportunities and ending the hopeless and self-defeating war on drugs. This will include legalising cannabis and decriminalising other drugs.

We want to build strong communities, expand youth facilities and improve public safety through policies that make our towns and cities better and cleaner environments. Prisons will be refocused towards rehabilitation, on helping people away from crime and back into society.



END THE WAR ON TERROR AT HOME

THE WAR ON terror is being used to create scapegoats and persecute communities and has become a 'catch-all' law with a chilling effect on political dissent. It is bound up with racism and imperialism.

We are in favour of repealing all anti-terror legislation, ending all collaboration with foreign governments fighting the so-called war on terror and for the arrest of anyone involved in torture, rendition or other crimes against humanity. There must be no more detentions without trial or secret trials.

STOP POLICE VIOLENCE

TIME AND TIME again we see police attacks on protesters and young people who are fighting back against injustice. The police are used by the government to clamp down on our civil rights, including the right to protest.

We are on the side of those who resist austerity and poverty, not those who repress. Disarm the police: no more tasers, extendable batons or CS spray. No water cannons in Britain. End stop and search as a policy as it is disproportionately used as a racist measure against young black men.

Left Unity is opposed to any attempts at the suspension of habeas corpus and will defend the right of trial by jury of our peers in open courts. We also defend the presumption of innocence and are against the right to silence being used as indicative of guilt.

All legal aid funding should be reinstated, and the privatisation of the criminal justice system must end. We support the abolition of police and crime commissioners, to be replaced by directly elected police authorities.

HUMAN RIGHTS

LEFT UNITY OPPOSES the government proposal to repeal the Human Rights Act and withdraw from the European Convention of Human Rights. If repealed it will lead to further miscarriages of justice, more attacks on the right to protest, more state surveillance over ordinary people, and more attacks on migrants and foreign nationals.

We fully support the rights of all people, regardless of background, culture, class, ethnicity, social status etc, to seek redress in the courts system against injustice and oppression in all its forms. The Human Rights Act provides important avenues for people to do this.

Left Unity does not uncritically endorse all judgements of the European Commission on Human Rights and supports progressive reforms to the European Convention itself where necessary, for example, the inclusion of a right to strike in the Convention.

Left Unity opposes state surveillance of internet traffic and demands the closure of GCHQ and the opening of its archives for public inspection.

CHILD ABUSE

WE URGENTLY SUPPORT the calls to see more action taken around the endemic problem of child abuse and violence that has been covered up by the system. Left Unity has worked with survivors and campaigners on this issue to challenge for a full and free abuse inquiry headed by someone not linked to the establishment.

Left Unity pledges also to fight for a better funded service to allow social workers, teachers, care workers, GPs, nurses and medical staff to detect child abuse at an early stage.

INTERNET FREEDOMS

GOVERNMENTS AND BUSINESSES regularly try to dominate and control the internet, using copyright laws and intellectual property rules to harass people and limit access to culture.

The scandal of intelligence agencies reading our emails and snooping on our online histories must end. Left Unity is in favour of internet freedom, an end to arbitrary censorship and support for the right to privacy online.



Constitution & Democracy



WE ARE AGAINST the monarchy and for a republic. We are for the abolition of the House of Lords, and for votes at 16.

The royal family's enormous wealth, land and palaces should be put to social use. The same applies to the aristocracy and their mansions.

The Church of England must be dis-established, its privileges ended and its wealth confiscated.

THE VOTING SYSTEM

THE FIRST-PAST-THE-POST single constituency system must be replaced with proportional representation. We support the right of prisoners to vote.

We would replace the current practice of always voting on a Thursday with voting on weekends.

We would research into the possibility of electronic voting. Clearly, if this is implemented we would need to be sure that the votes were protected from the possibility of fraud and guaranteed to be secure and secret.

Local democracy should be restored, with powers returned to councils and democratic control of schools, hospitals and housing.



Social Security

WE BELIEVE THAT the social security system has been one of the greatest achievements of the post-war welfare state but reforms by Labour and the coalition have led only to poverty and despair – as seen by the rising use of food banks, homelessness and suicides.

GUARANTEED LIVING STANDARD

THE NARRATIVE USED by the government divides people into 'deserving and undeserving' categories but less than 1 per cent of benefit claims are fraudulent whilst zero hours contracts, low wages and lack of affordable childcare drive 64% of families to claim at least one social security benefit. At the same time these reforms provide a massive taxpayer subsidy to low paying employers and landlords through Working Tax Credit and Housing Benefit.

We oppose the use of private companies to harass and bully claimants. We expect a social security system to guarantee a minimum living standard and to empower people to make an active contribution to society and the economy according to their abilities, which is adequately rewarded.

In the longer term we will review pensions and other areas but overall we hold to a basic principle that social protection must be publicly funded and administered. Social security should be promoted positively, as a crucial safety net.

NO SANCTIONS, NO BEDROOM TAX

OUR IMMEDIATE TASKS would include abolishing all sanctions, scrapping Universal Credit, reinstating Council Tax Benefit, scrapping the Bedroom Tax and the 'benefit cap' that discriminates against larger families, and reinstating benefit increases based on the RPI measure of inflation.

We will abolish all forced labour on welfare to work schemes ('workfare') and institute meaningful training courses for future jobs.



International

LEFT UNITY IS an internationalist party. There are no national solutions to the problems that humanity faces. Capitalism is an international system, highly organised and globalised and to defeat it we need to work together internationally too, with others that share our aims.

We want to learn from the experiences of other parties – like those in Latin America – which challenge and reject the neoliberal economic policies that are destroying our society. They are establishing social and economic alternatives in the interests of the majority of their people and they have lessons for us.

PEACE NOT WAR SPENDING

WE STAND FOR peace and equality between peoples and against imperialist wars, military intervention and the exploitation of other countries for economic gain.

We support nuclear disarmament – in Britain and worldwide – and a drastic reduction of military expenditure for the benefit of social spending, green jobs and sustainable development.

We want Britain to be independent, no longer tied to the 'special relationship' with the United States. To help make this possible, we call for Britain to leave the nuclear-armed military alliance NATO, to cancel the US/ UK Mutual Defence Agreement and withdraw from the US/NATO Missile Defence system. We would scrap Trident.

To this end we actively campaign against nuclear weapons and war and oppose foreign intervention in other people's countries. We want to see Britain's military and emergency forces reconfigured around a new definition of security needs, peacekeeping and international humanitarian aid work. We also support fundamental reform of the UN and its institutions to help bring an end to the domination of the world by a small number of powerful states.

A DIFFERENT EUROPE

LEFT UNITY DOES not call for withdrawal from the European Union, and we reject the current UKIP and Tory-led racist and xenophobic campaign against free movement of people within the EU (see Migration). But we recognise that the EU in its current form is a club for bankers and big business. It imposes neoliberal economic policies across Europe which increase the exploitation of ordinary people and attack our welfare provision. EU legislation like the Maastricht and Nice treaties underpin this.

We oppose the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and oppose joining the single currency. We support the European Left, of which Syriza is a member, and other similar parties and movements for a different Europe based on solidarity and democracy, and we support governments that stand up for ordinary people against the corporations, speculators and investment bankers.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

WE WELCOME ASYLUM seekers to Britain and reject and challenge the argument that immigration is a problem. We reject the stigmatisation of migrants and ethnic minorities, and attempts to project some states – or people without a state like Kurds and Palestinians – as enemies. We oppose antisemitism wherever it arises.

Human rights are central to our work, whether in support of the Palestinians, Kurds or other oppressed peoples and groups. We support the struggle of LGBTQ people who face massive prejudice and discrimination in many parts of the world.

At the heart of our international work is a commitment to combating man-made climate change and protecting the environment and all forms of life (see Environment). If we don't have a planet left we won't be able to fight for a better, fairer world!

SUPPORT FOR PALESTINE

LEFT UNITY STANDS in solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle against oppression and dispossession. To this end, Left Unity supports the call by scores of Palestinian organisations (including all

Palestinian trade unions) for a campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel until it complies with its obligations under international law.





Printed by Mixam UK, Unit 64, Wenta Business Centre, Colne Way, Watford, WD24 7ND Promoted by Chris Hurley on behalf of Left Unity, both at United House, North Road, London N7 9DP