

# Working with Labour?

**T**he vast majority of the British electorate can't afford another Tory government. Whatever the latest UK statistics say about falling unemployment and flat-lining inflation, most people are not feeling the 'good times' and the 'jobs miracle' seems more like a mirage. Incomes are not keeping up with the cost of living and the 99% are worse off than five years ago. Too many people don't get it. The millions on precarious zero hours contracts or self employed, don't get it. Those in receipt of in-work benefits because their family incomes are so low, don't get it. The 1.8 million unemployed, the sick, the disabled, the young, the homeless and the swelling numbers using food banks don't get it.

For the majority of the electorate it is still a choice between the Tory vision of greed and beggar-thy-neighbour and Labour's pinkish alternative. As ever, the challenge for progressives is whether to swallow very hard (fingers crossed, nose peg gripping nostrils) and vote Labour, or to support alternative parties and alternative policies which will build a grassroots movement. Some progressives will want to vote Green because their policies are more radical, anti-austerity and project a more sustainable, peaceable future. Others may vote for Left socialist, Left Unity or Trade Union and Socialist Coalition, candidates. Where Labour or the Tories have unassailable majorities this course can be tempting. In Scotland, the SNP has succeeded in challenging Labour's dominance both in terms of activism and voting power, and this is likely to usher in a period of shifting alliances rather than single party government regardless of the strength of Labour's vote on Election Day.

Right now, First Past The Post means one of only two kinds of government: Labour or Labour-led or Tory or Tory-led and this is all down to the 40 plus marginal seats. So, as George Monbiot writes in the Guardian there are 16 key marginals where percentages will count and Green supporters may feel squeezed and vote Labour in spite of their party allegiance. But the outcome of the Election and the horse-trading is unpredictable and it opens up many new possibilities as well as risks.

In this issue **Peter Kenyon** rehearses our critique of Labour's moderate alternative.

**Frances O'Grady** forcefully argues the case for secure, sustainable jobs, workers' voice, equality, and social justice in the workplace, a living wage and incomes that really improve living standards, much of which she sees in Labour's workplace manifesto. **Mary Southcott** outlines positive reasons for women to vote Labour not least for better representation, family support and equalities action. **Martin Rathfelder** of the Socialist Health Association echoes the Kings Fund in sounding alarm bells over the consequences of the Health and Social Care Act and with a death knell for the NHS of another Tory term.

**Prem Sikka** punctures the hollow promises of Cameron and Osborne on tax avoidance. Under their watch, the big corporate tax dodgers have continued to avoid £billions in unpaid tax. While Starbucks and Google count the profits, HMRC loses 25% staff, Cameron resists a 'Robin Hood' transaction tax and not a single dodger at HSBC has been prosecuted. **Ann Pettifor** reinforces this case for alternative economics by showing how debt and deflation benefit the hedge-funders and financial moguls to the detriment of the people.

**Andrew Smith** highlights one area of cutting we should favour: arms spending. He puts a cogent case for big reductions, especially Trident, which could pay much needed public services. **Nigel Doggett** and **Dave Toke** seek to green the election debate on the importance of action on climate change and Scottish oil respectively.

**Marina Prentoulis** and **Paul Mackney** remind us that Syriza in Greece continues to wrestle with the institutions of the IMF and EU to secure a new deal on debt and although the government have signalled a new tone in progressive policies for the poor and immigrants, the struggle is far from won and allies are needed across Europe.

After the debates and campaigning is over, it remains to be seen whether a Miliband-led government can secure enough terrain to put an end to ConDem austerity and construct a coalition for change. It means socialists have to roll up their sleeves and grit their teeth not only to get the Labour vote out, but to continue to make a case against austerity.

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See Chartist's alternative manifesto on [www.chartist.org.uk](http://www.chartist.org.uk)