



ASSESSING LABOUR'S LABOUR'S CANDIDATES ON PRACTICAL VALUES

By Virginia Moffatt and Simon Barrow

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1. INTRODUCTION

As part of its contribution to promoting positive approaches to issues of economy, sustainability, peace and community renewal in relation to the 2015 General Election, Ekklesia developed a set of **ten values and principles** (<http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/electionfocus2015>, section 6) which we used to assess the claims of competing parties and candidates, and promoted as tools of engagement and discussion.

As a non partisan thinktank rooted in practical action by Christians and others, we are seeking to develop and promote alternatives that link economy to human need, tackle inequality directly, oppose violence, take ecology as fundamental to all policy making, and make central the interests and expertise of the poorest, disabled people, sick people and others pushed to the margins.

We are a non-party political thinktank (drawing support from people who belong to a range of parties and none), but recognise the significance of debate in and around the different parties for the pursuance of the goals of positive, radical change – though we take the view that community self-organisation, people movements, subsidiarity and the constructive engagement of faith and civic organisations is the engine by which such change happens (including the restructuring of our institutions and the calling to accountability of particular parties and interest groups).

In this context, and despite the sometimes febrile media-driven ‘personality culture’ that it has involved, the 2015 post-election Labour leadership contest has raised once again some vital issues in public life. In particular, without taking a stand for a particular candidate, we note that the presence of Jeremy Corbyn on the ballot has widened discussion of fundamental economic and political issues, domestically and globally, quite considerably. The assumptions and supposed solutions posed by neoliberal, austerity-driven political economy have been questioned as never before. We very much welcome interventions by friends of Ekklesia in these debates, as well as the considerable growth in popular participation in these discussions.

In this paper we employ **Ekklesia’s ten core values / principles** for the renewal of public political life to assess the policies and claims of each of the four Labour leadership candidates, setting out areas of strength, weakness and uncertainty. Holding public figures of all parties and none to scrutiny on this basis is of considerable importance to the development of democratic and ethical character in political debate. We hope this process assists those both inside and outside the Labour Party to move forward in their thinking and analysis.

We have set out below the tables on each candidate some further points about the nature of the discussions and the larger issues at stake.

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2. ASSESSMENT OF LABOUR'S LEADERSHIP CONTENDERS IN RELATION TO PRACTICAL VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

Value / Principle	ANDY BURNHAM
A commitment to favouring the poorest and most vulnerable	Abolish youth rate minimum wage, increase Living wage. Could do more here. Partly Met.
Actively redressing social and economic injustices and inequalities	Commitment to support part-time workers, equality for marginalised groups. Proposes a strong economy that seeks alternatives to austerity. Ban on forced zero hours contracts and unpaid internships. Establish new Beveridge-type commission to look at how to pay for social care, graduate taxes, rebalanced tax system. These are good ideas but need more specificity. Partly met.
Welcoming the stranger and valuing displaced and marginalised people	Reforms to immigration – restrictions on immigration from EU, time limits on migrants claiming benefits and social housing. This continues a negative and stigmatising narrative against migrants and others in transit. Not met.
Seeing people, their dignity and rights as the solution not the problem	Nothing specific suggests this, although lots of positive commentary about young people and women. Neutral.
Moving from punitive 'welfare' to a society where all can genuinely fare well	Abstained from voting against the Welfare Bill, but promises to fight it. Urges improvements in housing to bring down Housing Benefit costs and support for people in employment to reduce costs of benefits to unemployed. Abstention from voting against the Welfare Bill gave a signal that Mr Burnham wasn't strongly opposed to it. In addition, the constant emphasis on employment still fails to reflect the needs of those who struggle to work. However, the initiatives on housing are welcome and the commitment to fight it through the next stages are to be welcomed. Partly met.
Promoting community and neighbourhood empowerment	Devolved power for local communities. Local councils to be single commissioners of all services, be enabled to borrow to build housing, be responsible for local transport and high streets. These are good ideas. Met.
Food, education, housing and sustainable income for all	Banning (forced) zero hours contracts, promoting a living wage, graduate tax to replace tuition fees, developing technical education, develop local role in overseeing schools, rejecting academies/free schools, national housing commission, development of affordable rents scheme and rent to own schemes without requiring deposits, lift local authority cap on building social housing, crackdown on absentee landlords, control of private rented sector, commitment to NHS and free social care, and public sector services exempt from TTIP. Affordable transport in public control. Oppose trade union bill. There are some strong and positive initiatives here. Met.
Care for planet and people as the basis for human development	Call for a moratorium on fracking. Commitment to Climate Change Act. This is welcome but could be stronger. Partly met.
Investing in nonviolent alternatives to war and force as the basis for security	Said he would back government on Syria military intervention in July and then changed his position in August. Would renew Trident. Supports Palestinian recognition at the UN but does not support BDS. No sense of commitment to nonviolent solutions. Not met.
Transparency, honesty and accountability in public and economic life	Extend voting age to 16 and make House of Lords representative by indirect election linking to votes cast in General Election distributed proportionately. Opposes more substantial powers to Scotland. Some positive ideas here. Partly met.
Conclusion	This is a coherent manifesto with some considerable thought put into it and a strong desire to break away from the privatisation of the path.

	However, it is weak when it comes to the rights of migrants and people needing welfare services. More work needed on economy. To some degree meets about half of our criteria.
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Value / Principle	YVETTE COOPER
A commitment to favouring the poorest and most vulnerable	Promoting proper Living Wage, particularly for care workers. Reversing the Conservative attack on trade unions. Restoring 'Sure Start' programme. Supporting work, but not supporting tax credit cuts. Good points, which are welcome. Met.
Actively redressing social and economic injustices and inequalities	Building a high-wage economy through digital and green revolution. Investing in science to create two million skilled jobs. Over emphasis on digital and green revolution creating higher jobs, no sense of need for government to intervene to help those who struggle to work. Partly met.
Welcoming the stranger and valuing displaced and marginalised people	Wants to see an agreement with France around closing Calais camp, and for government to process 'legitimate' claimants and accept a certain number of UN certified refugees from Syria. Criticised Philip Hammond's language. This approach at least begins to tackle the idea that migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are human beings, but could go much further. Partly met.
Seeing people, their dignity and rights as the solution not the problem	There are some indications that people are important in these policies but nothing specific. Neutral.
Moving from punitive 'welfare' to a society where all can genuinely fare well	Abstained on the Welfare Bill. However, has said Labour needs to go further and develop a Welfare Reform Commission looking at child poverty but makes no new suggestions around disability. Partly met.
Promoting community and neighbourhood empowerment	No specific policies. Neutral.
Food, education, housing and sustainable income for all	Universal childcare, building two million homes in a decade. Partly met.
Care for planet and people as the basis for human development	No specific policies. Neutral.
Investing in nonviolent alternatives to war and force as the basis for security	Voted in favour of renewing Trident. Wants to tackle extremism but gives no details. Supports UN recognition of Palestine but not BDS movement. No sense of commitment to nonviolent solutions. Not Met.
Transparency, honesty and accountability in public and economic life.	No policies in this area. While a Cabinet Minister 'flipped' her home three times for expenses and was referred to the Parliamentary watchdog for her expenses in 2011. Opposes more substantial powers to Scotland. Not met.
Conclusion	Despite claiming to have a radical agenda, Yvette Cooper's policy statements seem very thin on detail and there is no sense of a coherent set of policies that will really tackle inequalities in depth. Her record on expenses is disappointing and may lead to a sense of distrust. Meets around a third of our criteria.

Value / Principle	JEREMY CORBYN
A commitment to favouring the poorest and most vulnerable	Has been consistently anti-austerity since it was imposed and critical of the orthodoxies of neoliberal economics. Opposed to zero hours contracts. Supports collective bargaining. Supports the Living Wage. Met.
Actively redressing social and economic injustices and inequalities	Has published a wide-ranging economic strategy for growth based on high quality jobs. Ideas include crackdown on tax evasion and avoidance, establishment of a National Investment Bank for infrastructure upgrades and innovation, 'People's QE', reductions in corporation tax relief and subsidies. Ensuring those who earn the most, contribute the most. A good start on tackling current austerity policies and addressing inequalities. Met.
Welcoming the stranger and valuing displaced and marginalised people	No scapegoating of migrants, support for refugees and asylum seekers. Has consistently supported campaigns for displaced people, including speaking with people from other parties at an Ekklesia-sponsored event on the issues before the General Election. Met.
Seeing people, their dignity and rights as the solution not the problem	A society that accepts everyone. Not much detail here. Partly met.
Moving from punitive 'welfare' to a society where all can genuinely fare well	A lower of welfare costs through investment and growth not squeezing less well off and cutting tax credits. Voted against the Welfare Bill and is a consistent supporter of disability campaigners. Met.
Promoting community and neighbourhood empowerment	No specific policies though supportive rhetoric. Neutral.
Food, education, housing and sustainable income for all	Looking to develop a fairer country with decent public services. Supports nationalisation of railways. Developing house building programme and rent controls. A national education service throughout our lives. No privatisation of the NHS. Met
Care for planet and people as the basis for human development	Need to act in long-term interest of the planet against corporate interest. Has stated he wants to fight climate change, but also noted that if carbon neutral techniques could be used he would be willing to open up South Wales Coal Mines. Opposes fracking. Only partly met.
Investing in nonviolent alternatives to war and force as the basis for security	Standing against injustice where we find it, looking to build a more peaceful world through cooperation and dialogue. Voted against nuclear weapons. Voted against Syria airstrikes. Consistently anti-war. For justice in Palestine / Israel and supports BDS movement. No more illegal wars. Looking to get rid of Trident and ensure workers have other jobs. Met.
Transparency, honesty and accountability in public and economic life	Has among the lowest expenses at Westminster. Wants the Labour Party to be more democratic and participatory in order to bring about social change. No specific policies about political reform, has opposed Proportional Representation. Not in favour of more substantial powers for Scotland at present. Only partly met.
Conclusion	Of all the candidates, Jeremy Corbyn is ostensibly offering the strongest alternatives to austerity and the most progressive policies to make a real difference to people's lives. In some areas he lacks detail. His position on coal mining is open to criticism and he is weaker on political reform. For providing an opportunity to debate big ideas and to change the nature of the political/ economic conversation, his presence on the ballot has been welcomed by those who want to see significant change. He meets just over two-thirds of our criteria to a significant degree.

Value / Principle	LIZ KENDALL
A commitment to favouring the poorest and most vulnerable	Pay a Living Wage. Restore Working Tax Credits. Ensure public sector pay increases. Reverse the Conservative bill on unions to ensure people get protection at work. Stop abolition of student grant for poor people. Reasonable start, but limited in scope. Partly met.
Actively redressing social and economic injustices and inequalities	Plans to address inequality through education. Fund early years learning by reversing the Chancellor's inheritance tax cut. Ensure fair access to curriculum for children with special needs. These initiatives are welcome but very limited in scope. There is no thought about the wider system beyond education. Only partly met.
Welcoming the stranger and valuing displaced and marginalised people	Endorses the Australian 'points style' immigration system for people outside the EU – one which has been condemned internationally as being inhumane. Wants migrants to work before they can claim benefits. Has denounced Calais refugees for trying to enter the UK illegally. Says immigration can be positive for communities, but espouses harsh and populist policies. Despite saying migration is positive, Liz Kendall has adopted a punitive, judgemental attitude to displaced people and those migrating. Not met.
Seeing people, their dignity and rights as the solution not the problem	Give people right to choose their own carers. Close Assessment and Treatment Centres for people with learning disabilities. Giving people right to choose their own carers is a good step to being in control. However, closing Assessment and Treatment Centres, though well intentioned, runs the risk of there being insufficient mental health services for people with learning disabilities. Very limited in scope. Only partly met.
Moving from punitive 'welfare' to a society where all can genuinely fare well	Supported the party's acting and deputy leader in not opposing the benefit cap or child tax credit cuts. Abstained from opposing Welfare Bill. Believes public don't trust Labour on welfare. Wants to abolish Work Programme and give responsibility to local government. Although the final point is potentially positive (depending on the funding regime), overall Ms Kendall gives the impression that her perception of public views on welfare trump any desire to abandon the current punitive welfare system and replace it with genuinely humane alternatives. Not met.
Promoting community and neighbourhood empowerment	Recommends devolution of powers for local communities to take more responsibility for health, education, welfare, transport, housing and economic growth. Suggests a more federal United Kingdom but opposes more powers for Scotland. Thin on detail concerning how this differs from current arrangements, but desire for local responsibility is to be welcomed. Unclear on regional and national disparities. Partly met.
Food, education, housing and sustainable income for all	Living Wage and grants for poor student. These will help, however nothing coherent on housing. Partly met.
Care for planet and people as the basis for human development	Match ambitious Paris plan for climate change and build on 1.4 million green jobs by 2020. Welcome but nothing new, and thin on detail. Partly met.
Investing in nonviolent alternatives to war and force as the basis for security	Voted in favour of Trident renewal. Supports recognition of Palestine at UN, and need for peaceful resolution to Israel/Palestine conflict. Opposed to settlements, and opposed to BDS. Supports NATO aim of 2% funding on military. Has highlighted Russia and Islamic extremism as issues that must be dealt with robustly. No sense of a commitment to nonviolent solutions. Not met.
Transparency, honesty and accountability in public and economic life	Does not appear to have made any significant pronouncements about this. Opposes more substantial powers for Scotland. Neutral to not met.
Conclusion	While there are a few good ideas, overall Ms Kendall gives a sense that her leadership would have a narrow focus on limited issues that risk pandering to negative views on immigration and welfare. She does not seem to have a wider view to challenge austerity or develop alternative economic models, nor a vision for a nonviolent, sustainable world. She meets fewer than half of our criteria.

THE LARGER ISSUES: EXTENDING THE PARAMETERS OF THE DEBATE

A leadership contest in any organisation should not simply be about personalities, attempts by journalists and others to ‘catch out’ individuals, or the reinforcing of unquestioned orthodoxies in the realms of politics, economics, security, environment and global affairs. Rather, it is (or should be) an opportunity to think about change and how it happens; to refocus on character and virtue as the building blocks of public life; to ask about underlying beliefs and values; and to consider how competing groups and parties can think about collaborative ways forward for human flourishing. In other words, it ought to be about opening up space for creative conversation, rather than limiting it to narrow perceptions of ‘success’ or ‘failure’ within the unchallenged parameters of existing political discourse.

1. Political culture and participation

Labour’s leadership contest has been largely conceived in terms of who or what is adjudged to be ‘electable’ in Britain as it is. But as the theologian Jürgen Moltmann has pointed out, qualitative change can never be based or predicted solely on ‘the way things are’. Hearts, minds and material conditions need to be challenged and changed through concrete engagement in order to perceive fresh possibilities. Candidates for public office should be encouraged to enable us to question the way we (and they) see the world, not simply to reinforce existing prejudices and anxieties. As Richard Rohr OFM, from the Centre for Action and Contemplation, puts it: we do not so much think ourselves into new ways of acting, as act ourselves into new ways of thinking. For example, the issue of migration, which has loomed large in recent months, cannot be considered in abstraction from human relationships. To our knowledge, none of the candidates pronouncing on those questions have been to Calais (in the way that some humanitarian and Christian groups have lately) to speak from and out of engagement with suffering humanity – though we know that Jeremy Corbyn, for example, has been deeply engaged with displaced people and their human rights. ‘At a distance’ thinking needs to be transformed by ‘relational thinking’. On the positive side, Labour’s leadership election, in much the same way as the Scottish independence referendum campaign in 2014, has helped to revive public meetings and has led to re-engagement with tens of thousands of people at a grassroots level. The question remains as to what such engagement might entail and how it might be extended and sustained.

2. Changing politics political systems

In recent years the political system at Westminster has been increasingly dominated by the City of London and corporate interests. It has become more remote. There have been scandals around finance and accountability. An unelected second chamber made up of people of privilege lies unreformed. Issues of the localisation of power to the nations and regions of these islands remain unresolved. The dominance of Oxbridge and the public school system remains intact. Substantial reform and change is needed, including a real, public debate around these questions and with the possibility of civic forums and constitutional conventions. These issues have largely been bypassed as Labour looks for a new leader.

The influx of new members and supporters to Labour, the SNP and the Greens – as well as the renewal of civic participation – has been a gain over the last two years. But swathes of young people and those who are most marginalised by our current economic and political settlements are still being left on the sidelines to a significant extent. (Labour has also, by most accounts, handled its attempt to broaden involvement through its ‘supporter’ system badly, with unclear boundaries followed by ‘purges’. The SNP and the Greens in both England and Wales and Scotland also face challenges to their existing ways of working, and to the generation of genuinely participatory cultures.) For both good and ill, political parties play the major role in our electoral system and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. It would be healthy if such parties grew out of people movements, rather than becoming the plaything of vested interests. They also need to be held to account by a more diverse and plural media, within systems of governance and administration open to public scrutiny and involvement, and by civic organisations and assemblies that have a real connection to power and its use. Again, these questions are not central to ‘political debate’ as exemplified by Labour’s contest, as they should be.

3. ‘Credibility’ and ‘electability’

The public conversation about who and what is ‘credible’ and ‘electable’ is considerably shrunken and distorted at present. A cynical view that people cannot be persuaded to vote for substantial change on the one hand is matched by a naïve belief that rhetoric is going to initiate such change on the other.

This unhelpful polarity is reinforced by many questionable readings of history. Conservative hegemony in the early 1980s was aided by splits within the opposition, the emergence of a televisual culture that favoured some leaders over others, and the impact of the Falklands/Malvinas crisis on political decision-making. The idea that Labour’s ‘suicide note’ manifesto was the main factor, or that there is much parallel between what was on offer in the 1980s and what is on offer in today’s debates, is highly questionable. Similarly, while the Blair government clearly captured a public mood, Labour also lost millions of voters during that era compared to ‘less successful’ ones, and a major factor in Labour staying in power prior to the 2010 election, was disarray within the Conservative opposition. Drawing one-sided or simple lessons from either period of political history does little to help clarify present and future possibilities.

There is, however, considerable evidence that the personality and appearance of particular leaders does play a major part in political decision-making (egged on by a ‘celebrity’ culture). This needs challenging, but it is a reality.

Likewise, the voting public does seem strongly influenced by a set of particular narratives (economics misleadingly shrunk to deficit reduction, ‘migrants’ as blameable for social pressures and problems, etc.) which can only be shifted as factors in determining what is seen as ‘credible’ and ‘electable’ when strong but thoughtful alternatives are posed. Stories are as important as facts here. People respond to emotion, both positively and negatively.

One interesting factor to emerge over the past year is a growing sympathy for politicians (like Jeremy Corbyn and Nicola Sturgeon, whether you agree with them or not) who combine a relatively unvarnished humanity with a clear set of principles. By contrast, heavily manicured politicians who ‘flip and flop’ according to perceived public taste are less liked. Some of the contestants in Labour’s leadership election almost give the impression of acting ‘in role’ at times. That is part of the problem, not part of the solution. Authenticity needs to come to the fore – for moral, not simply pragmatic reasons.

There are all kinds of contradictions at play here, of course. ‘Image’ and a certain understanding of ‘professionalism’ continue to play an important role in shaping perception, even as they are simultaneously denounced for being based on superficial judgements. There is a parallel with advertising: many decry it and claim not to be influenced by it, but there is much evidence that it still ‘works’ in shaping consumer demand. That is why it remains a massive industry. Again, the deeper concern that we need to attend to is challenging and changing the culture, rather than simply choosing a location within what is presently on offer. Transformational ‘edges’ and ‘tipping points’ may be significant here.

Ekklesia’s materials for the 2015 UK General Election emphasised the desirability of ‘Vote for What You Believe In’ over the endless quest for tactical advantage (vote for what you don’t really believe in, in order to seek to thwart a worse outcome). If you never choose what you want, you never get it. Positive campaigning that stimulates active hope, rather than negative campaigning that consolidates support through fear, is always to be encouraged. To say this is not to be naïve about outcomes (or their incalculability, let it be added), but to act ourselves towards the ‘new kind of politics’ that many talk about but few are prepared to invest in.

4. Rethinking leadership and change-agency

Much of the talk about who or what is ‘electable’ during Labour’s leadership election has appeared to reinforce the existing expectations of one half of the Westminster duopoly. At the General Election the third party, the Liberal Democrats, who had participated in the 2010-2015 Coalition Government, were outmanoeuvred and defeated by the Conservative Party. The outcome was not a ‘hung parliament’, as many anticipated, but a slender Conservative majority. However, this does not mean that Labour and the Conservatives can continue to assume that the ‘real choice’ (read: ‘only choice’) is between them. The two-party system is deeply fractured. Political pluralism is growing. It is healthy that political parties are being made to think about how they can work together, as well as where they continue to differ and contest. New possibilities, public virtues and decent principles do not exist only in one place. Labour’s incoming leader needs to be able to recognise the consonance as well as dissonance between his party and the Greens, the SNP, Plaid Cymru, and the Liberal Democrats, for example. (We also have the new Rise party in Scotland, the National Health Action Party, Women’s Equality Party and others.) The idea that Labour is “the opposition” on its own no longer holds water. There are now other contenders, and it would appear that there is a long way to go before Labour itself recovers a real sense of what it stands for, how and why.

Likewise, the pluralism of nations and regions will play an important part in the political future. This opens up the possibility of more localism and autonomy within parties themselves, and a debate not just about devolution or independence, but about confederalism within the component parts of the British and Irish isles – the idea that different parts of what is now the UK may become self-governing, but also capable of contracting together to achieve political economies of scale where appropriate. Likewise, the EU referendum will open up a set of competing visions of the Europe of which we are also a part. There is much to be gained from these debates, but it is also undeniably disorienting that they all seem to be occurring at the same time. There is much disequilibrium to be negotiated. Here it is principles and practical values (such as those we have sought to enunciate through Ekklesia) which can offer the necessary anchorage to provide stability in the midst of choppy waters. That and a reinvesting in neighbourhoods, networks (virtual and otherwise) civic life, non-government organisations and ‘communities of conviction’ (religious or otherwise). The public square will continue to be reshaped over the coming years, and the principles of participation and pluralism (rather than privilege or patronage) need to be at the heart of what is considered.

In terms of Labour’s leadership choice (and that facing any other party) it is therefore important to recognise that the person who is chosen will have the job not just of making their own party cohesive, but of opening up lines of conversation with others. The idea that a set of clear principles cannot also embrace collaboration for change needs to be contested. Here we also need a more positive and nuanced understanding of ‘change agency’. Power is currently structured pyramidally. The base clearly needs strengthening and widening. Matrices of power need clarifying and exposing (for example, the place of the civil service in relation to political mastery, and so on). Crucially, people in different locations within our evolving systems of representation and decision-making (from community groups and campaigns to MPs, ministers and public officials) need a better understanding of what can and cannot be achieved at different levels. This will require increased transparency, fresh spaces for thinking anew across those boundaries, strengthened solidarities, and an awareness of where the real conflict still lies – between those who monopolise power and wealth and those who are denied it.

Talking of conflict, people are generally less inclined to think in predetermined terms of ‘left’ and ‘right’ in the way they once were; yet the media, especially, finds such labels over-convenient. To acknowledge this is not to buy into the kind of de-politicisation which allows democracy and decision making to be hollowed out by big money and consumerism. Rather, it is about permitting the terrain to be reshaped by ideas that emerge from experimental living. Cooperatives are an obvious historical example. Basic (or citizens’) income is the emerging one. Such ideas need to be explored in their own right, rather than being accepted or rejected on the basis of preconceived political notions. Again, questions raised by the values / principles to which Ekklesia is working (does it benefit the poorest? Is it sustainable, Is it empowering? Does it protect or enhance the environment? Is it nonviolent, and so on) may be more useful starting points for evaluating both specific proposals and moves towards larger-scale alternatives than a litany of what is supposed to be ‘progressive’, ‘radical’, ‘conservative’, etcetera.

5. Rethinking economics

One of the most interesting (and also frustrating) debates around the Labour leadership election has been that concerning the economy. Again, like it or not, 'Corbynism' (proclaimed recently to be "not as radical as many suppose" by a tranche of economists) has stirred the pot well. The obsession with deficit reduction has at least partially been challenged (though few grasp that a pound owed publicly is thereby available elsewhere, for example), flaws in austerity thinking raised (making the poorest pay for a crisis they did not create and cannot solve without resources), and contradictions of neoliberalism exposed (markets are not free or fair when they are monopolised and rigged by the few), and so on. From the New Economics Foundation, Prime Economics and Tax Research through to the dissident economists of a re-thought Keynesianism and the Green New Deal, fresh ideas and debates are starting to threaten tired orthodoxies from the margins. The Greens in England and Wales made something of a mess of Basic Income at the last election, but the idea is being incubated and developed in a number of different places. The Scottish referendum has put currency debates on the table. Plaid Cymru and the SNP may have a gap to negotiate between rhetoric and policies posed against austerity, but it offers opportunities. Conservative and Liberal criticisms of neoliberal economics exist (though they are marginal and quiet). 'Just money' and 'the joy of tax' are being talked about anew. Infrastructure quantitative easing is being debated heatedly (though there is still too much dismissal of the idea through the misleading language of "printing money"), Progressively inclined economic thinkers of different shaped and sizes (Joseph Stiglitz, Paul Krugman, Danny Blanchflower, Frances Coppola, Ann Pettifor, Richard Murphy, Jonathan Portes, Mariana Mazzucato, John Azis, James Meadway and many others) are gaining more attention. Of course there is huge disagreement among those examining alternative economic, financial, fiscal and monetary approaches. But that can be a positive, generative thing.

In the midst of this, Channel 4 economics editor Paul Mason has published a hugely important, stimulating book on *Postcapitalism*, part of an opening up of serious conversation about the viability and sustainability of our present, dominant economic order for perhaps the first time since the end of the Cold War and hubristic speculations about 'the end of history'. Essentially, Mason is arguing that what in previous debates was described as post-Fordism (the dominant system of production, consumption and associated social/technocratic phenomena in most industrialised countries since the late 20th century), along with the digital revolution, opens up radical possibilities for the recapture of markets by people-driven economic democracy. The creation of the 'collaborative commons', systems of horizontal rather than vertical integration, the convergence of communication with energy and transport, nonprofits, socio-economic networks and a 'super-internet' are among the factors that could help us towards a more sustainable and just economy, argues Jeremy Rifkin of the Foundation on Economic Trends. The Compass thinktank is re-investing in conversation about 'New Times' (Hall, Jacques *et al* from 1989).

There are of course, more dystopian readings of the situation than these. Issues of control and ownership also remain, and are often underestimated by those looking towards a different dawn. But the key point here is that there are at least promptings in a more positive direction (premised also on the failures of austerity, the injustices of neoliberalism, and the real possibility of another crash to follow that of 2007/8) emerging from the hinterland of Labour's debate – though more of it seems to be happening outside rather than inside, it must be added.

Last but not least in this area is the contribution of belief and values. Ekklesia is pleased to be connected to debates on alternative economy happening within the worldwide ecumenical movement, where churches and civic organisations (plus some Muslim economists and others) are asking both the big questions (macro-economy) and the necessary smaller ones (micro-economy) and are coming up with creative ideas. Another space to be watched.

6. Sustainability, peaceable action and social welfare

Finally, the absence in the Labour leadership debates of much serious discussion about climate change (the big game-changer for economy, migration and much else besides in the 21st century), nonviolent solutions to conflict, and the need for public systems of social security which enable all to survive, flourish and innovate has been painfully noticeable. Again, the established political parties tend to act cautiously with concerns that do not register on voter patterns or register negatively. But this short-termism is disastrous for the future. This, once more, is why a set of values and principles which can keep the horizons open as well as cohering specific initiatives, is important. One of the initiatives that Ekklesia is working on, with others, is a *Manifesto of Hope*, aimed at doing precisely this for politicians, civic and faith groups.

RESOURCES FROM EKKLESIA AND ELSEWHERE

* As an accompanying paper, see: 'Assessing the party manifestos for core values and principles': <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/partymanifestos> and 'General Election 2015 focus: 'Vote for what you believe in': <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/electionfocus2015> (see especially section 6 of the latter).

* Along with these papers, we recommend attention to a series of reports published by Ekklesia on economy, migration, welfare, housing, political reform, independent and associational politics, social security, youth participation, climate action and more. These are available online from: <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/research> and succeeding pages.

* Ann Pettifor, *Just Money: How society can break the despotic power of finance* (Prime economics, 2014): http://www.primeeconomics.org/?page_id=2389 and <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/19919>

* Paul Mason, *Postcapitalism: A guide to our future* (Allen Lane, 2015).

* Richard Murphy, *The Joy of Tax* (Transworld, forthcoming): <http://www.thebookseller.com/news/transworld-brings-forward-release-book-author-corbymomics-310139>

* Compass, *New Times: How a politics of networks and relationships can deliver a Good Society*, 2015: <http://www.compassonline.org.uk/publications/new-times/>

* Centre for Welfare Reform library: <http://www.centreforwelfarereform.org/library/>

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ABOUT EKKLESIA

Founded in 2002, Ekklesia is a public policy think-tank that explores the changing nature of the relationship between politics and beliefs in a plural world. Committed to social justice, peacemaking, environmental sustainability and new economy, it seeks to combine transformative Christian thinking about public life with ideas and insights from a range of allies beyond the Christian tradition.

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