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## What Labour should do now

PAUL ROGERS 14 July 2016

**To make a real difference, Britain's Labour Party should be bold and think big.**

During the coming Labour Party leadership battle in Britain, there will be a critical need to *inspire*, *promote* and *oppose*. And all with a double audience in mind: the actual Labour Party electorate, but also the wider public. *Inspire* people with innovative approaches on many key issues, *promote* specific examples which illuminate the [potential](#) of a Labour government, and *oppose* by repeatedly focusing on the problems that the Conservative government will be facing.

The dominantly antagonistic and right-wing national press will cause all the trouble it can, especially for [Jeremy Corbyn](#) but also for Labour as a whole. Even so, large-scale public meetings will get local print and broadcast media coverage, with these outlets much more sensitive to viewer and reader opinion. Remember that many provincial dailies have readerships in their circulation areas that are close to the combined local readership of the nationals. Moreover, social media lend themselves to useful coverage.

In doing this, one way to have a real effect is to change the nature of the whole debate. This still means speaking to and for the alienated and the [marginalised](#). But it also means bringing in major new elements, some domestic but other clearly [international](#), the latter focusing on Britain's potential role in a post-Brexit world.

So here are three domestic and three international elements. They are not exclusive of others or of issues already to the [fore](#). They are merely examples - and there may well be better ones.

### **First, domestic:**

**Business** Invest in SME support but strengthen financial regulation, especially in the finance sector itself. Demand hugely more effective action on tax avoidance, but fund HMRC to ensure it has adequate expertise. Seriously take on tax havens. Increase higher tax rates. Offer fiscal and other support for mutuals, cooperatives, co-ownerships and other forms of business organisation. Halt and reverse creeping privatisation of the NHS and education while investing seriously in many elements of the national infrastructure.

**Transport** Cancel HS2 and replace it with heavy investment in upgrading the capacity and quality of rolling-stock on all major intercity routes. Opt for modest increases in speed but more

emphasis on passenger comfort, especially less overcrowding. Invest in rapid and systematic electrification across the north starting with the Trans-Pennine route. Take Southern back into public ownership now and return railways to public ownership as franchises expire but within franchise periods if companies fail to deliver to newly set higher targets for service delivery.

**Energy** Cancel Hinckley Point and replace with heavy investment in renewables, with far more emphasis on wind energy, both onshore and offshore, and invest heavily in research and development of new systems for generation and especially storage. Reverse recent government downgrading of green [policies](#) and put far greater emphasis on energy conservation.

## **Second, international:**

**Post-Brexit** Accept Brexit, but use it to [argue](#) for a new international role for Britain which combines continued commitment to Europe as a whole with far greater emphasis on worldwide links, not least the Commonwealth. Thus, argue for the UK being in the unique position of unrivalled connections to Europe, north America and the global [south](#), in facing the common global problems of the failing neoliberal economic system and critical environmental pressures.

**United Nations and Security** Support and commit strongly to effective United Nations peacekeeping, including a commitment to lead investment into a UN Emergency Peace Service. Prepare to lead on this, including a highly trained multinational standing force with Britain at the centre. Make Britain as the lead player in this field. Accept that the wars since 2001 have been disastrous and have left countries, including Britain, less secure. Demand a complete rethink of strategies using the best available analysts given a free reign to propose new [options](#), however radical. In the light of [Chilcot](#) and the continuing problems with ISIS, this will strike a chord.

**Environment and Development** Emphasise that climate disruption is the greatest long-term security threat to everyone, but especially to the marginalised. Maintain the development budget in full but call for the reform of DfID towards a far stronger [commitment](#) to action on deep poverty and gendered and sustainable development, all in the context of persistent anti-corruption policies.

In all cases, argue with confidence and never fail to remember four elements:

- \* The Conservative government has already had to [reverse](#) core policies
- \* The 2008 financial crisis had its origins in the banking system, starting with the toxic loan [debacle](#) in the United States. It was not the fault of Labour, but Labour *had* failed to regulate the financial sector adequately. The party will not let this happen again
- \* Individual bankers, hedge-fund managers and the rest are not the problem – it is the system itself which is the problem, because it is far more deep-seated and entwined with the progressive failure of the neoliberal economic system after forty-plus years. Only Labour recognises this and is [ahead](#) of the times, not behind them. Repeat this with confidence
- \* The greatest global threat comes from [climate disruption](#) – repeat *ad nauseam*.