

# HAVERING **FABIAN** SOCIETY

## HAVERING FABIAN

Volume 2 Edition 54 September 2023

**Havering  
Fabian Society  
Covering  
meetings with  
Carolyn Simpson  
and Hannah  
McHugh, future  
meetings with  
Councillor  
Harriet Spoor,  
Ben Molyneux  
and Jon Cruddas  
MP.**

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## Introduction

Welcome to the new edition of the Havering Fabian Newsletter. The Labour lead in the opinion polls remains over 20 per cent, and a Labour Government is now likely. The period up to the election will be an important one, with the GLA elections in May 2024 which could well precede the General Election, which must take place by 28<sup>th</sup> January 2025 at the latest. Hopefully, we will not be campaigning over the Christmas period!

We now have 1,380 followers on twitter. Keep up to date at our twitter site @haveringfabians for the latest news. We have a blog now as well as our website <https://haveringfabians.org/posts/> You will need to follow us to get updates.

We are affiliated to the four local Labour Parties and will do all we can to support their campaigns. Havering Young Labour are reorganising, and we will update you on contact details as soon as possible. Our October speaker Councillor Harriet Spoor writes on this and young people in politics below.

As opinions are the lifeblood of politics, we welcome a reply to any of the articles. The Fabian Society exists to promote political debate, both within and outside the Labour Party. Progressive politics extends beyond the Labour Party and contributions from the Labour Movement are welcome.



Our website address is <http://haveringfabians.org> As you are no doubt aware GDPR means we need to keep our mailing list up to date. If you are

not on our mailing list (we use Mailchimp – please check your spam folders!) contact us via the website or email and we will add you in.

## **RIP**

In August Alf Ott died after a lengthy illness. Alf was a regular attender at Fabian meetings until he stopped driving in the dark. He was a great supporter of the Co-Operative movement and a loyal member of Dagenham and Rainham Labour Party.

He was well known in the movement – MP Gareth Thomas was pleased to see him when he spoke some years ago, having known him for many years.

Our thoughts are with family and friends of Alf's family.

## Councillor Harriet Spoor - Young People active in politics

When I became the youngest Councillor to ever be elected to Barking and Dagenham Council in March, I also became East London's youngest present serving Councillor – it is and always will be the honour of my life to be able to say that.



*Figure 1 Harriet Spoor outside the former Civic Centre (now an offshoot of Coventry University)*

I know the importance first hand of the challenges young people face when they become involved in the world of politics, and how important it is- but also sometimes just how hard it is- to project the activism and concerns of younger generations on to the national political agenda. In my term in public office I really hope as Vice Chair for North East London Young Labour to develop this, and not just at local level for the party, but also to prove to the young people of the community which I represent that the next generation is so vital in getting the next steps right for the betterment of our futures.

I hope that in my ward and across Barking and Dagenham, at the Council I am at a minimum a voice for our young residents and can inspire them to engage in politics, no matter at what level.

I have been a member of my two respective unions (GMB and National Union of Students) for numerous years now as well as a member of the Fabians and Labour Women's Network and know that our shared values are at the foundation of my voice as a young person in politics.

However, when I was fortunately elected, I noticed the huge disparity in the level of involvement in mainstream politics among young people, and it was really disheartening to see that so many young voices go silenced or unnoticed. I am privileged in the sense that I have the confidence to speak freely about the issues that impact me, and while society can make reasonable adaptations to safeguard our futures, that certainly is not the case for everyone. Young people across the country know what matters to them and the improvements and changes they want to see to benefit our society. Many of us know the importance of climate change, of education, of mental health or neurodiversity and of the devastating impact that economic disparity has had on our generation – yet our voices are hardly taken seriously by our government, and we are usually told to let the adults deal with the problems.

Therefore, when I was elected to public office, although at local level, I knew of the importance of making sure that young voices and the pressures that our generation face would be at the forefront of everything I do. I am privileged to be in a position where locally, young voices are noticed; in Barking and Dagenham we have an active Young Mayor and the Barking and Dagenham Youth Forum who are really engaged in our local communities and keen to put their ideas forward to governance, which is appreciated greatly.

However, when talking to other younger Labour party members we also realised we don't have the opportunity to really delve into campaigning and launching grassroots engagement so that we don't just make suggestions and hope they are actioned by entities like the Government, but also really take control of local issues and improve them for the wider community.

Out of these discussions we decided to re-establish Dagenham and Havering Young Labour – under a new name and new leadership – North East London Young Labour. We knew that we had more in common with other areas of our wider community too, which is why under new

leadership we also invited the young members of Barking CLP to organise with us too. Whilst we are a small Young Labour branch, we are also the most diverse – our executive committee is currently over 50% female, and we have representatives and activists from across Havering and Barking & Dagenham.

We are currently discussing about campaigning on the issues that would improve our communities across local authority and constituency borders such as including us campaigning for fair Photo ID in elections (after calls of disproportionality in ID for voting between younger and older generations), supporting Dagenham and Rainham PPC Margaret Mullane with cleaning up our local areas with her community-led litter- picking campaign as well as hoping to re-establish a small campaign in Romford at Queens Hospital to introduce transport incentives for our incredible, hardworking NHS workers – all of the Young Labour campaigns will be discussed at our next meetings and will be finalised.

Our hope at North East London Young Labour is that we expand our membership and make a difference to the communities which we are proud to be a part of, and we are so grateful for the support that our Constituency and Branch Labour Parties give us, both members and officers included, and the incredible support we receive from affiliating groups such as the trade union movement and the Fabian Society and look forward to speaking to Fabian members about our plans as a Young Labour branch to encourage young activism in politics and work with affiliating groups to protect our core values.

**Cllr Harriet Spoor**

**Councillor for Heath Ward - LBBD**

**Vice Chair (Membership and Campaigns) for North East London YL**



## Carolyn Simpson - Organising Women in the workplace.



Figure 2 Carolyn (right) shares a joke with meeting chair Julia Pearman (left) before the meeting.

Carolyn welcomed the invitation to speak and gave a history of organising women within the workplace. She used research by Professor Nicole Busby and Rebecca Zahn, from the University of Strathclyde, ‘A dangerous combination?’ as the source of information see the links below for further reading on the subject.<sup>1</sup> The following is adapted from notes used for her speech which we thank her for providing.

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<sup>1</sup> Zahn, R., & Busby, N. (2022). Women's labour and trade unionism - a dangerous combination? In J. Shaw, B. Fletcher-Watson, & A. Ahmadzadeh (Eds.), *Dangerous Women: Fifty Reflections on Women, Power, and Identity*



The first women's strike was in Yorkshire by 1,500 card setters (no idea but almost certainly awful!)<sup>2</sup> and following a women mill workers strike in 1835, a commentator (probably a man as there were few if any women social commentators at the time!) stated that female militancy was 'more menacing to established institutions even than the education of the lower classes'.

So, we see that women workers' early attempts to take collective action were classed as a serious threat to social cohesion according to 'society' and female militancy was an anathema to societal norms – and still is?

Although trade unionism and the intellectual underpinnings of the labour movement were instigated around and by women (one need only think of the economist and labour historian Beatrice Webb {often referred to as one of 'the Webbs', i.e. the wife of Sidney} who was a pivotal figure in her own right) as well as men, once institutionalised, the labour movement became focused on the needs and concerns of the 'standard male worker'.

Today there remain perceptions of gendered occupations, segregation, and the prevalence of part time work. All impact on the relevance of traditional trade unions to working women's lives.

Carolyn can remember going to a meeting in an aerospace factory and overhearing one of the men saying to another "we need help here and they've sent us a bloody woman." So, the issues facing women are not limited to dealing with male management, and echo those in the distant past.

Outside of (the then) traditional women's work (e.g., spinning and weaving,) movement into factories, women were considered a real threat to societal order and moral values (and who put these values in place? men and established religion!)

The Bryant & May<sup>3</sup> strike took place in 1888 and set the precedent for the Dockers Strike the following year – the so-called dockers tanner strike – following the dismissal on some spurious grounds of a woman worker

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<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia suggests a card setter is "a machine for setting the wire teeth in making card clothing" – so probably a machinist.

<sup>3</sup> [Matchgirls' strike - Wikipedia](#)

who had refused to sign a paper disputing an article written by Annie Besant re their horrific working conditions, long hours, fines for minor infringements in the workplace, no clean area in which to eat (leading to 'Phossy Jaw' where the flesh would rot away from workers' jaws and faces) etc.

After their colleague's dismissal around 1,400 women and girls walked out, and shortly afterwards all 5,000 went on strike. After lengthy negotiations, the strikers went back to work with improved conditions and pay -

In the period between 1888 and 1918 trade union membership rose from 750,000 to 6.5 million. Although women were a third of the workforce, only ten percent were union members.

Trade unions were set up specifically for women workers, for example the Women's Protective and Provident League (representing women workers from dressmaking, upholsterers, book binders, artificial flower makers, tobacco workers, jam & pickle makers, shop assistants & typists), Women's Trade Union League Co-Operative, the TUC's Women Workers Group Guild, National Federation of Women Workers, National Anti-Sweating League, Shop Assistants Union (some men allowed!)

Should note that at this point, trade unions excluded and discouraged women from participation (plus ça change!).

The Stereotypical image of trade union membership was pale male and stale and remains so.

World War Two saw women taking men's jobs but with only 53% of the pay. One of my aunts trained as an engineer during the war but was sacked as soon as the men started to come home and she had to return to the finance sector, where she remained unfulfilled for the rest of her working life. She was a truly bitter woman.

At the end of the War, state nurseries were withdrawn very quickly with explicit approval of the TUC. The TUC tried to persuade women to return to home-making roles (as above with Carolyn's aunt).

The TUC annual report 1948 stated that 'There is little doubt in the minds of the General Council that the home is one of the most important spheres

for a woman worker and that it would be doing a great injury to the life of the nation if women were persuaded or forced to neglect their domestic duties in order to enter industry particularly where there are young children to cater for’.

We have a number of working class women role models that we should look at: Julia Varley an early activist in the Workers Union which was to become part of the T&GWU<sup>4</sup>, Mary Macarthur, General Secretary of the WTUL<sup>5</sup>, who led the women chain makers of Cradley Heath in their strike for better conditions and pay, Sarah Chapman who led the strike at Bryant and May, Sally Groves a lead activist in the AUEW<sup>6</sup> in the Trico strike for equal pay, Jayaben Desai leading the way at Grunwick (and who organised for APEX<sup>7</sup> after the event!).

And we should also be aware that there are at least eight women general secretaries of UK trade unions today (including Unite!), but it is not enough.

Keep fighting, everybody!

Carolyn then took questions from the audience, which confirmed the view that there is a long way to go within the workforce in achieving equality within the workplace, and the union movement.

**Carolyn is a former Regional Officer of Unite the Union.**

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<sup>4</sup> Transport and General Workers Union, the forerunner to Unite.

<sup>5</sup> Women's Trade Union League - Wikipedia

<sup>6</sup> Allied union of Engineering Workers

<sup>7</sup> APEX - Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff - Wikipedia

**Hannah McHugh****'Are the Tories backsliding Britain out of democracy? How Labour can take back control.'**

Islington Councillor and Chair of the Fabian Law and Constitutional Policy Group Hannah McHugh was the speaker at our September meeting.

Over 13 years, we have watched the Tories devalue the United Kingdom. Our backsliding economy, NHS, public services, and justice system are among some of the headlines of this descent.

Crucially, there have also been sustained attacks on the British constitution. In this talk Hannah discussed how these attacks have impacted the constitution and the health of British democracy.

Taking the proposals of the Brown Commission Report into the Future of the UK, and Starmer's proposed 'Take Back Control' Bill as a launching point, Hannah discussed what a Labour government could do to protect, reinvigorate, and uphold the values of our constitution.

Hannah provided the text of her talk which is used below with minimal editing.

Thank you very much for inviting me. Very glad to have the chance to come and speak to you. I am going to cover quite a lot of ground in this talk and mainly I would like to stimulate a good discussion with you at the end.



*Figure 3 Keith Darvill introduces Hannah McHugh*

There are, unfortunately, so many constitutional and democratic concerns swirling overhead now and while I will not be able to discuss them all in the depth I would like, I am going to try and weave a thread between them all.

Consider first some of the most impactful slogans of recent politics: ‘take back control’ – ‘levelling up’ – ‘left behind’ – ‘for the many, not the few’ – ‘one rule for them and another for everyone else.’

What links all these slogans? The answer is: power. Power centralised in the hands of a few, and a lack of power in the hands of many.

It is incredibly important that we see that empowerment means having access to functioning services like NHS care, as well as good quality jobs and education, a clean environment, a functioning justice system.

But fundamentally, questions of power are questions about our democracy. Democracy means that citizens have a right to power. Our ability to secure and protect the economic and social power of our citizens is tightly linked to our constitution.

In fact, if we cannot get the rules of the game right, if they are skewed towards some players and away from others, then we are never going to have the fair or just society we believe in

It is so important then that we are here talking about the health of our democracy.

I am a Labour Councillor, and I am also a political theorist – so my perspective on these questions comes from these angles. I am motivated by getting power to people locally and my perspective – as a political theorist – is to ask the questions of what values we want in our democracy and whether they are being upheld.

So, I hope you will indulge me, I would like to start today by talking about the values of democracy, and clarifying how our constitution is and is not able to live up to those.

Then I am going to set out how the Tories have undermined our democracy and how they have – so far - managed to get away with that. Finally, I will turn to discussing how we as a Labour movement could look to restoring the health of our country.

What is a democracy and why do we want it?

This seems like an obvious question with an obvious answer. That is in part because we will all have our own conception of democracy, and we will be using the term with our definition in mind.

I think, the best way to approach the idea, can be summarised in the slogan that democracy is there to ensure that our law is made ‘on the people’s terms.’

Law ‘on the people’s terms’ gives some level of control and influence to every single citizen.

This entails much more than just majoritarianism. If law is ‘on the people’s terms,’ it is not just the will of a majority. That would be more akin to an elected dictatorship.

Democracy also must protect the interests of minorities. Any elected government – famously - needs to be subject to checks and balances to

protect us from unaccountable and governments who seek to abuse their power.

Our constitution is there to ensure that every citizen has power through democracy.

We are not free just because we vote in an election.



*Figure 4 Keith and Hannah discuss the joys of being a Labour Councillor*

We are protected by three important pillars to a democracy that give citizens power.

Each one of these pillars has been attacked, wobbled, and weakened in recent years. We need to defend them.

The first pillar, free and fair elections – The Electoral Commission has lost its independence. Voter ID has meant that up to two million people will be denied their freedom to vote. This is disenfranchisement on an industrial scale and a shameless grabbing of power.



The second pillar: independent judicial institutions with enough integrity to uphold and protect citizen's rights. We have seen attacks on the judiciary in the prorogation scandal, the undermining of judicial review, attacks on leftie lawyers and degradation of the legal aid system and courts. In 12 years 48% of legal aid firms have closed. Far too many people are not free to access justice.

The third pillar, civil and political rights. Rights are a key tool in protecting our freedoms from power grabbing governments. We have lost and are losing our freedoms to protest, to strike, and even our Human Rights are under threat. Some citizens can even now have their nationality revoked under the Nationality and Borders Act.

Brexit was a vote to bring power back to people. But the government that promised to bring that power back has concentrated it in the hands of an elite few.

So – what could this mean? Let us put these attacks on our democracy in an international context.

Taking up the title of the talk, we are living through an era of democratic backsliding.

In the 20th century there was a fast uptick in the pace of states becoming democratic. But, in recent times, we have started to see the number and the health of democracies decline.

What is new, is that this is not only happening in terms of a coup d'état or sudden overthrow – as we have been historically used to. This is happening through elected governments, using the political process, to pass laws which undermine democratic values and institutions. Governments – who like ours – use a rhetoric that undermines our public values and institutions. We must call out these undemocratic slurs.

That is the nature of the populist playbook when populists get to power – they say they are being held back by 'the elite' or 'the establishment' and unravel the constraints on them. The huge irony is this is normally done by politicians who ARE the elite and establishment (I am thinking of Johnson, Sunak, Trump).

We have seen developed democracies sliding towards autocracies: it has happened in the US under Trump, and in European countries – Poland, Hungary, Slovenia. Recently attempts in Israel too.

What is important to note is that democratic backsliding is not an on or off kind of thing. It is something that happens over time.

Preventing backsliding requires vigilance. In a democratic constitution there is always this careful balancing of powers and voices. If the constitution is working well, citizens can hold power to account.

Especially in our context of an unwritten constitution, holding power to account requires action from voices like civil society, or of course opposition parties, where these problems are identified and then taken head on. We must be campaigning to uphold citizens' power.

The UK constitution is incredible.

Powers and freedoms are set out in our famously unwritten British constitution. Under our system of parliamentary sovereignty, our framework for politics and power can be changed by any Parliament. In theory, this makes our constitution remarkably dynamic and simpler to change than most countries.

Yet, to say we have this dynamic political framework, we live in a country with some of the most enduring institutions of anywhere in the world: like our monarchy.

The strength of our enduring institutions, I believe, has been their ability to adapt to changing values. We have managed to craft a uniquely British form of government.

Our values of freedom, pluralism, tolerance, and fundamental rights have been designed and defended in the face of political challenges. We have a constantly contested balancing act.

On one of side of this, there is a stabilising (small c) conservatism toward our national identity and on the other side, there is the fight for contemporary values and social progress. Our constitution – the powers of our nations, regions, counties, cities, towns, and citizens have - require care, engagement, and modernising.

Neither party at this point have clearly spelled out their constitutional offer. BUT – there is scope here – for Labour to have a radical leaning brief, that leads to significant growth, and where there does not have to be a huge capital commitment!

So – thank you for indulging me on the theoretical side of our political system. Now I would like to dig deeper into how the Tories have managed to get away with this industrial scale damage and disempowerment.

They have been able to do this because they have controlled the popular narrative about democracy, power, and freedom.

Labour needs to reclaim this discussion.

Consider Braverman's comments from the Conservative conference earlier this year:

She was quoted arguing that the Left 'sees the purpose of politics as to eradicate the existence of inequality, even if that comes at the expense of individual liberty and human flourishing.'

This is Braverman pretending that freedom is just a lack of state intervention. The idea that an unregulated market, and free speech for Tory ministers and people with the privilege to be heard is enough for liberty.

It was very interesting that the proposed new 'Bill of Rights' was a copy paste of the Human Rights Act, except for one new right of 'freedom of speech.' Well with a government seeking to silence lawyers who represent the most vulnerable in our society, like migrants, and who has taken away millions of people's right to vote – it is very clear whose free speech they care about.

This neo-liberal lie about what freedom is, must be called out. These lies are mirror images of lies about 'trickle down economics' and the unregulated free market economy.

Freedom is power, and power OVER your state.

We are free because we can participate in our society!

The two ideas – freedom and power – go hand in hand. Labour needs to emphasize these arguments about power and freedom, so that we can really show what has been lost under 13 years of Tory government. This government has given freedom to a select few cronies and taken it away from ordinary people.

We can think of freedom as not being at mercy of someone else's goodwill – whether that is an exploitative employer, a profiteering gas supplier, or a government that rushes laws through parliament with little scrutiny.

Freedom is – like social justice and equality – dependent on having power and opportunity. If we cannot participate in society, if we cannot contribute to our country and to our laws, then we are not free.

We should make it clear that we will protect and entrench people's real freedoms to access work, housing, healthcare, education, skills, community life and justice.

So- how do Labour give back freedoms, and how do we reinvigorate our democracy?

Putting power in people's hands, is not just a constitutional question – although I think it requires a constitutional change. When people complain of lack of power, I doubt that many of them refer to the constitution. What comes up when I am on the doorstep is poorly paid jobs, access to GP services, energy bills.

Crucially, imbalances of power and economic or social imbalances go hand in hand.

There is no other large, developed country like ours that has as an economy so geographically unequal on so many measures. Inequality between and within regions has grown.

In pure GDP per capita terms, half the UK population live in areas no wealthier than the poorer parts of the former East Germany, poorer than parts of central and Eastern Europe, and poorer than the US states of Mississippi and West Virginia.

The UK is uniquely centralised. No other large country takes so many political, fiscal, and economic decisions at the centre. Whitehall and Westminster control around 95% of the UK's tax revenue, and 75% of the UK's public spending – a far higher concentration of fiscal power than in any comparable country

Centralised power leads to an unbalanced economy

We have seen top-down reorganisations of England's schools, NHS, and justice systems. These have not improved outcomes.

The more we lag economically the more people feel abandoned by an unresponsive system of government. So, what is bad for our economy is also bad for our democracy.

Britain needs an irreversible shift in opportunity, income, and wealth across our whole country. But that will only be guaranteed through an irreversible shift in power, outwards to people across the country. To deliver security and prosperity for all parts of the United Kingdom we must change not only who governs but the way we are governed.

So how do we do this? What are the steps? I expect we'll talk much more about this in Q&A, but I want to quickly frame here some of the solutions on the table. These could all be included within a 'take back control bill' –

We need to address these problems in two directions – from the bottom up and from the top down.

Thinking first about 'Bottom up.'

We must put power closer to people. We must allow people to have a stake in the decisions that affect them. This should be the backbone of Labour's manifesto, it will lead us to improved power for citizens, regions and nations and it is essential to growth.

All of this makes the case for a radical devolution of power to locally elected and locally accountable representatives best placed to identify the needs and opportunities in their own areas, and to unleash the potential that exists everywhere throughout the country.

Local and devolved decision makers are already substantially more trusted than central government to make decisions in the best interests of their area.

Imagine if we were able to create new regional clusters of connected industries that can provide the high-paying good jobs we need and increase demand and wages in the everyday economy. To deliver this we need to bring cities, towns, and other areas together as part of a coordinated economic strategy.

With this devolution, we could have a radically reformed suite of place-based, innovation-led R&D programmes, with Mayors and local leaders in all parts of the UK playing a key role in design and delivery. This should include the replacement for EU regional funding, and future support for the Strength in Places Fund.

The Brown Commission has set out an important agenda for devolution, which I hope will be the backbone of Labour's levelling up agenda. Crucially, if we are going to respect the immense diversity of the UK, particularly within England, this is going to need extensive consultation and a phased approach. I expect that the eventual settlement will be a 'messy' one – and that is something that we need to be comfortable with.

Turning to the top-down changes we need:

That famous phrase - 'The fish rots from the head' – has never felt so true as under this succession of rotting Tory governments.

There is much about Westminster that has been exposed as not working. Abuse of power could have been Johnson's slogan. Sunak has lied over and over that he will restore integrity and accountability. Clearly, he does not mean it. That was clear when he failed to turn up to vote on whether to impose sanctions on Johnson for lying to Parliament over Party Gate.

Abuse of privileges and power have been coming thick and fast: Partygate, Cameron lobbying for Greensill, Johnson taking up a Daily Mail column without clearance – to name but a few examples. Appallingly, the government tried to rewrite the rules for Owen Paterson when he was found to have acted inappropriately.

It is one rule for them and another for everyone else.

We must sweep away the broken ministerial standards regime with the creation of an independent Ethics and Integrity Commission.

It is time to “turn the page on Tory sleaze” and restore standards in public life.

The rules that apply to MPs should be on a statutory footing – they should be set out in law. They should be clear and accessible.

We have had such quick-fire alternations of Ministers in recent years that hope of holding Ministers accountable has all but evaporated. People feel disempowered when they cannot hold their politicians to account.

Consider how an MP becomes a minister: through loyalty to the PM. Being willing to go on BBC breakfast and defend whatever ridiculous statement the PM last lied about. There is NO requirement to gain credibility or expertise in a particular policy area. I believe that we should be subjecting Ministerial appointments to a Parliamentary approval. That would at least give incentives to MPs to demonstrate a credible track record of their behaviour and to develop good character in Parliament.

The problem is, so much of what a politician does or is supposed to do is not clear to the public. Some people think an MP is supposed to be fixing their potholes, others think their MP should be voting consistently against their government. Problems of MPs who are never present in the constituency – or like Nadine Dorries perhaps are hiding somewhere within it – need to be addressed. We should put the job description of an MP in law, on a statutory footing. At least then we can point to bad behaviour and give people back the power to hold their politicians accountable.

One way that Johnson and – unbelievably Truss – have been subverting our democracy, is by stuffing the Lords full of outrageous candidates. People who undermine the legitimacy of the House. Evgeny Lebedev! Young advisors!

The Lords is so crucial to our democracy but is becoming increasingly untenable in its current form.

Brown’s Commission has argued for an elected Assembly of Nations and Regions to replace the Lords.



This idea has featured in several Labour manifestos, but we now have some meat on the bones for the proposal.

Brown's Commissions have argued for an Upper Chamber that represents in a proportional way the geographic make-up of the United Kingdom, and so could give representation to currently disempowered parts of the country.

The Assembly would hold a constitutionally embedded obligation to safeguard the institutions of the Constitution and the settlement of the Nations and Regions. This includes a powerful veto on legislation in conflict with this principle.

Having a geographic representation in the Upper Chamber could help to ensure that legislation will always regard the balance of power in the UK.

That said – there are huge complications associated with moving to a fully elected Upper Chamber which I expect we can discuss in some more depth later.

As you will all know, there have been many attempts to reform the Lords. In fact, it was the 1911 Parliament Act which said explicitly that the Lords would become an elected chamber – something that is still on the British to do list!

Often there is a perception that reform attempts have failed because of the strength of the Lords – the thought being that reform would require turkeys voting for Christmas.

But in fact, all the reform attempts have all failed in the Commons. MPs instinctively have reticence to passing legislation that will decrease their own power. One reason that Blair's government stopped short of such reform was the realisation that it may have hampered the government in getting through the ambitious package of legislation it wanted to pass!

We cannot be naïve to the difficulties associated with passing reform. Given that Lords reform is so difficult, I believe that Labour should be pushing to pass some 'quicker win' reforms immediately while that wider and deeper reform is sought and consulted on.

First, appointments to the House of Lords should be required to meet enhanced eligibility criteria. We need a properly empowered Appointment Commission that can guard against spurious honours.

We should have a system where any Prime Ministerial appointments are made proportionally to the electoral make-up of the House of Commons. There must be an upper limit to the number of possible appointments by a Prime Minister.

And of course, we must get rid of the last remaining hereditary peers.

Okay, it must be coming to time for me to sum up. What I hope I have highlighted is that with the right powers in the right places, we can unlock the potential for growth and prosperity in every part of the country, and in doing so revive people's faith in politics.

Amazingly, Labour's vision is to transform everyday people's lives by putting power in their hands. We do this by reducing inequality, supporting growth, and widening opportunities. These are real freedoms.

The Labour Party is being continually asked, what is our vision for the next election? To answer this, we need to do two things: connect Labour's values with the values of voters and show that a Labour government is the answer to the everyday problems people face.

Our values are power and opportunity, and by rebalancing power and opportunity we are answering to real problems of people who feel they have been left behind, and no longer have access to what they need.

Spreading our message using the language of freedom can tap into the real experiences of voters, who have lost their social, economic, and political power and allows us to hit back at Tory lies. To rebuild the integrity of our country, we must put power back into people's hands.

**Hannah McHugh is a political theorist, an Islington Labour Councillor and Chair of the Fabian Society's Law and Constitution Policy Group**

## **Future Meetings**

### **17th October meeting - Councillor Harriet Spoor**

In a change to our previous arrangements, the October meeting is now on Tuesday 17th October at St Joseph's St Marys Lane Upminster at 7,30pm. The speaker will be Barking and Dagenham Councillor Harriet Spoor.

Harriet is an undergraduate at Queen Mary college. She worked in the Jon Cruddas office and was selected as the Labour Candidate in the Heath Ward by- election earlier in 2023 and won comfortably. She became the youngest Councillor in the UK at 20. Her Tory opponent was eighteen.

She recently completed a prestigious work experience placement at Rolls Royce.

She helped reform the Havering Young Labour group now a wider Northeast London group. She is the Vice Chair.

The subject will be "Young People in politics".

### **14th November Ben Molyneux**

Local GP and Romford Labour campaign co-ordinator Doctor Ben Molyneux will be the speaker. The venue will be the ROYALS in Rainham with a provisional start time of 7.30pm. The subject will be the Health Service and current issues.

### **3rd February 2024 AGM -Jon Cruddas MP**

Jon has been a regular speaker at our meetings and is standing down as an MP at the next election. This will be a chance for Jon to comment on the upcoming General Election and look back on his time as an MP.

### **Stephen Timms meeting**

The Dagenham and Rainham fundraiser (details below) was arranged for 19th October, a clash with the original date. We are looking to rearrange.

We appreciate this will be disappointing, but if we had clashed, attendances at both events would have suffered. We are looking to rearrange early in 2024. **Apologies to all for any inconvenience caused.**

## Fundraising events

With the next General Election due in 2024, the local Labour Parties are continuing to campaign. This requires funds and Dagenham and Rainham CLP have arranged a series of events to raise money for the campaigns.

### 19<sup>th</sup> October

The first of these is on **19th October at 7pm**. Margaret Mullane sent the following invitation: am hosting a fundraising social with guest speaker Jon Cruddas MP at the popular Kusadasi Taverna, 90a Rainham Road, RM13 7RJ.

Tickets are £25 for a two-course Turkish meal (including vegetarian options), there will also be a raffle and a pay-bar available.

For this and future events we have set up an online system so that people can purchase tickets in advance - link below.

[Fundraising Dinner with Margaret Mullane PPC and Jon Cruddas MP Tickets, Thu 19 Oct 2023 at 19:00 | Eventbrite](#)

Please feel free to extend the event and ticket details to friends, family and colleagues who may be interested, as we are trying to build our membership.

**All proceeds will go towards our general election campaign fund.**

**Thank you for your support.**

Kindest regards

Margaret Mullane  
Prospective Parliamentary Candidate  
Dagenham and Rainham Labour Party

## 21st November

- The GMB have arranged a fundraiser in central London Details on the following link.
- Speakers will include.
- Shadow Foreign Secretary David Lammy MP
- Jon Cruddas MP
- Penny Robinson GMB Regional President
- Jen Craft PPC for Thurrock
- Peter Roberts GMB Regional Political organiser
- Hosted by Dean Gilligan GMB London Regional Executive

[Fundraising Dinner for Margaret Mullane - Dagenham & Rainham Labour PPC Tickets, Tue 21 Nov 2023 at 19:00 | Eventbrite](#)

The cost is £40 per person, proceeds to the General Election campaign.

## 7th December

There will be a Christmas social to raise funds details to follow.

## Links

Blog	<a href="http://haveringfabians.wordpress.com/">http://haveringfabians.wordpress.com/</a>
Website	<a href="https://haveringfabians.org/">https://haveringfabians.org/</a>
Twitter	<a href="https://twitter.com/HaveringFabians">https://twitter.com/HaveringFabians</a>
Facebook	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/havering.fabians">https://www.facebook.com/havering.fabians</a>
LinkedIn	<a href="https://uk.linkedin.com/in/havering-fabians">https://uk.linkedin.com/in/havering-fabians</a>

## Online payment

There was a positive response to paying annual subscriptions online with 70 % of those responding willing to pay online. Details are included in the regular Havering Fabians email. Contact us for further details if you are not on the current mailing list.



## **Politics in Havering**

You may already be aware of the excellent Politics in Havering Blog, which we repost via our twitter feed. This gives a regular update on politics within the borough – a link is below, please follow them (and our blog!) for regular updates!

<https://havering.blog/>

## **We value your input!**

The Society invites speakers on a range of subjects; if you would like us to invite speakers on a particular subject let us know and we will try to oblige. The Society has a policy of rotating meetings around the borough; if you need or can offer a lift or if you know of any suitable venues we could use, contact David Marshall.

## Local Fabian Society Contacts

	Contact
<b>Chair</b> Councillor Keith Darvill	David Marshall
<b>Membership Secretary</b>	31 Vicarage Road Hornchurch RM12 4AS 01708 441189 <a href="mailto:david.c.marshall@talk21.com">david.c.marshall@talk21.com</a>
<b>Vice Chair</b> Sanchia Alasia	
<b>Treasurer</b> Dave Baldock	



*Chair Keith Darvill reports ...*

## **Future Editions**

The Fabian Society exists to promote progressive ideas from within and outside of the Labour movement. As such we are happy to publish articles in keeping with this broad ethos but reserve the right not to include all or part of any material which falls outside of this parameter. Our next edition will be in December 2023 – contributions welcome.

## **Havering Fabian Society is affiliated to.**

- National Fabian Society
- Dagenham and Rainham Labour Party
- Romford Labour Party
- Upminster and Hornchurch Labour Party
- Barking Labour Party

## **Havering Fabian Membership**

To join Havering Fabian Society, please complete the following and send to David Marshall. You can also join the Society nationally; David has more details. You do not have to be a member of the Labour Party to join Havering Fabians, but you will need to be a Labour Party member to take part in Labour Party selections and elections.



## **Havering Fabian Society**

Founded in 1974, the Society promotes progressive political thought in Havering and beyond. Membership of the Society is not necessary to attend meetings, and neither is membership of the Labour Party.

However, to participate in nominations to the Local Labour Parties or in selection conferences, membership of both is required. The Society meets regularly throughout the year, apart from the summer and during election campaigns. Local Membership is currently £10 waged, £5 unwaged.

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**I\ we wish to join Havering Fabians**

**Name .....**

**Address .....**

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**postcode.....**

**E-mail.....**

**Phone number .....**

**Waged (£10) unwaged £5 .....**