

# ***The OULD Journal***

***Trinity Term 2020***



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## ***Editor's Welcome***

Hello and welcome to the OULD Journal for Trinity Term 2020!

The Lib Dems stand at a turning point: who will lead the party in the post-COVID world? Layla Moran or Ed Davey? What will the Lib Dem take on the economic recovery be? How do Lib Dems intend to tackle the racial inequalities still present in our society?

I hope that you will be able to find some answers to these and to many more questions in this issue of the OULD Journal.

I would like to thank all those who contributed to this Journal. My special thanks goes to Harry and Hermione for their pieces in our leadership debate section.

Yours liberally,

**Edd Peckston**

*Ex-President, Journal Editor*

## *The Future of the EU: is it all Doom and Gloom?*

2020 has undoubtedly been a trial for the European Union. Faced by the coronavirus pandemic and the looming spectre of Brexit, the European Union is left wondering what its future might be. As the faded power of the United States settles in for a long dispute with China, eyes are looking to the old continent and its infamous political organisation. With borders going up across the Schengen zone in March and the pandemic characterised by a lack of solidarity amongst EU nations, it looked as though the European dream might die with the virus. However, the latest EU summit demonstrates that this will not be the case, at least if Emmanuel Macron in France and Angela Merkel in Germany get their say. Far from being dead and buried, the EU project is very much alive and with one of the barriers to EU integration, the UK, leaving the bloc at the end of this year, the future of the European Union is very interesting indeed.

The future of the EU is far from certain; threatened by the rise of the far-right across Europe, it must fight for its survival. However, by committing themselves to a common relaunching plan following the recession brought on by the coronavirus pandemic, the EU nations have demonstrated their desire to keep the flames of their dysfunctional marriage alive. With the borrowing scheme costing €750bn, the EU nations will share this common debt for at least 30 years, demonstrating their desire to avoid a divorce in the future. However, one of the major issues faced by the European Union is wealth discrepancies across the bloc. With the countries of the South facing different economic questions to those of the North, East and West, the European Union needs to ensure that in the future, efforts are made to spread European wealth across the 27-nation bloc. Economic questions are often at the heart of Euroscepticism so in order to ensure the future of the EU dream, this needs to be addressed. Common debt, common expenditure and the possibility of common taxation are just the beginning.

As the unfriendly spectre of Brexit looms on the horizon, the EU must ensure that Brexit changes everything for the United Kingdom and nothing for the European Union. With euroscepticism rising in France, where talks of a Frexit surface before almost every election and where Marine Le Pen made it into the second round of the 2017 presidential election, Brexit undoubtedly poses an ideological question. If Britain, a country which has always stood somewhat apart from Europe, can make a success of their messy divorced, what's to stop France and the other nations from following suit? However, though Brexit undoubtedly poses ideological questions, those posed by Hungary, where Prime Minister Victor Orbán profited from the pandemic to allow him to accumulate new powers to rule by decree without a set time limit, are more serious.

Commitment to the democratic dream is a pillar of the European Union. However, with the Hungarian government exploiting the pandemic to escalate the erosion of fundamental rights and democratic safeguards, the European Union must decide how to act. Though emergency powers were undoubtedly needed in many countries to respond to the threat of the coronavirus pandemic, these measures should be temporary. However, there are fears that the actions taken in Hungary are nothing more than a preliminary step on the pathway towards a dictatorship. The problem is clear; the political situation in Hungary makes a mockery to the European commitment to democracy. The solution, however, is less so. 2020 has been a year of trials for the European Union. As Boris Johnson's December 2019 electoral victory made Brexit a sad reality, the United Kingdom risks crashing out of the European Union without a coherent deal. Meanwhile, the lack of coordination between countries at the time of the pandemic raised the question about the utility of the European Union and international organisations as a whole. However, the plans for a coordinated response to the looming economic recession provides euromphiles with hope for the future of the European project. Therefore, though the future may remain uncertain, it isn't all doom and gloom for the EU.

**Natasha Voase**

*Spirits Officer*

## ***Consistency is Key - Why I'm voting Ed Davey***

Ed and Layla's campaigns have the same aim; projecting the Liberal Democrats as anti-Tory and centre left. Ed's team has been more effective and consistent in this without falling for the media traps as Layla's has. This is why I shall be voting for Ed Davey. We must engage the electorate to defeat the Tories. But people don't trust us because they don't know what we stand for. Consistent messaging with a laser like focus is key in regaining the public's confidence and attention. This is Ed's great strength and I shall vote for him.

Layla's campaign *appearing* (whether it happened, or not) to say 'we shall be more radical than Labour' does not help to win seats. Politically engaged Liberal Democrats can see that journalists have twisted words or set up bait media traps. But your average voter who hates Corbyn will not. Ed's campaign has been consistently hammering home the right messages more effectively, than Layla's.

Ed's campaign has built an effective coalition of voters from all across the party, whilst keeping consistent core messages. The simple messages being - 1. Defeating the Tories is of utmost importance. 2. We will realistically defeat them mainly in the South East, South West and in other commuter belt seats such as Hazel Grove and Cheadle, 3. We do that by opposing the Tories whilst being outspoken on issues that Labour cannot address - but not be anti (nor totally pro) Labour.

Ed's campaign is impressive in its diversity: 13 former MEPs, the Chair of Lib Dem Campaign for Racial Equality, Jane Ashdown, and 5 MPs. This includes Daisy Cooper, who everyone was sure would back Layla. Instead of dismissing these people as having 'sold out', perhaps one should think about why those who backed Jo Swinson so adamantly, and who are so critical of the coalition, and in normal times would stay out of leadership discourse, are this time backing Ed. The trust Ed commands from his diverse support is pretty damn good.

What has made me come to my decision has been campaign strategy and positive messaging. We mustn't waste time in pointless discussions. Threats of 'I will leave the party if X wins', who wrote or supports what policy more than the other are irrelevant. Policy is a conference matter irrespective of the leader. Layla is not a Corbynite communist and Ed is not a Cameronite Tory! This nonsense further damages the party brand.

I am weary of people who seem to believe that apparent failure of the coalition is the be all and end all to future electoral success. While I do not see how a 5p tax on plastic bags in exchange for protecting welfare cuts was a good trade off, a post 2015 MP leader is no magic bullet. 2019 has shown us that rising Lib Dem poll numbers mean nothing if those votes are in the wrong places. It can feel satisfying to see Labour supporters on twitter admire Layla. But that is a long way from getting their votes and getting their votes in the right places.

We must respond to the electorate by building a new winning brand with strong and consistent messaging. People don't care about Brexit or party ideology. They want jobs, a vaccine, and stability. Layla's campaign's scattergun approach is not up to the mark. We need consistent stable branding. Ed's campaign is delivering that.

## **Hermione Peace**

*Ex-Vice Chair*

Young Liberals

## *Why vote Layla?*

We are asked once again to elect a leader. My view is that of the two candidates, we should elect Layla Moran.

Let's first diagnose the problem with the Lib Dems. In the four elections since 2005, we have only gained seats once, and since 2010 have never breached 12% of the vote. We are a shadow of our former selves. But, as 2019 proved, if we get the formula right, we can win on scale. At our zenith, at the 2019 European elections and immediately afterwards, we had regular media appearances, were trusted on our issue of Brexit, and had a simple message which captured the attention of a significant section of the public. This is the winning formula we need to recapture.

Layla is getting national media coverage in spades. Every day, her comments are in multiple newspapers, she has interviews on the radio and on TV, and she is getting her face and the party line out to the public. And it's not just in one outlet either – she has worked with the Daily Express to achieve a Coronavirus Compensation Scheme, and has won praise from the Daily Mirror for her work supporting frontline workers during the COVID-19 crisis. Layla knows how to get media attention, and will use it to our party's advantage.

Layla's freshness and solid voting record will allow her to gain the trust of the public. However much we may wish it to be otherwise, the Coalition is still an albatross around our necks. On more than half of the days of the 2019 general election campaign, national news media – both newspapers and TV – carried coverage of Jo Swinson's voting record, harming her trustworthiness and competence in the eyes of the electorate. Without a Coalition voting record, Layla has no such problem, and can move us forward together with a modern liberal vision.

That vision and message is where Layla excels above all. Her central idea is simple: giving everyone the security to live life as they choose, on their own terms. In 2020, we can achieve this by addressing the concerns of voters and campaigning for a fairer economy, better education, and environmental renewal. Layla is in favour of a universal basic income, to ensure everyone has the economic security to be able to pursue their own path in life. She wants investment in early years education, to stop inequality at its root. She wants well-paid teachers with a flexible curriculum tailored to pupils' needs. And she wants a carbon-negative economy, to ensure that people's lives are free from the devastating impact of the climate crisis.

On a personal level, I campaigned for Layla in 2015 when she lost in Oxford West and Abingdon. And in 2017, I was part of the team which helped her win the seat. Sitting in the JCR with other members of Oxford University Liberal Democrats and seeing her result come in was one of the greatest experiences of my life. But we got there through hard work, and Layla's knowledge and grit in being able to flip a seemingly insurmountable Conservative-facing seat. With our targets being as they are, and with the Liberal Democrats likely being the only people who can deprive the Conservatives of a majority at the next election, her proven strategic knowledge will be essential in achieving our goal of gaining more seats and getting the Tories out of office.

In sum, Layla possesses the media skills, the trustworthiness and the message which can get us from a place of danger to a place of success. Combined with her proven track record in defeating the Tories, she is, in my view, the best candidate for leader. I hope you will join me in voting for her.

**Harry Samuels**

*Ex-President*

## ***Change our unjust Voting Laws to give all Immigrants full Voting Rights***

Full voting rights should not be dependent on British citizenship. Every time I have argued this in political conversation, others have disagreed, shaking their head in disbelief. They invariably go on to say that it makes little sense for anyone other than the British to be able to vote in British general elections. My argument is a red herring, however. Today, Irish citizens and the citizens of 53 current and former Commonwealth countries can do just that, provided they are registered to vote here — the former thanks to principles enshrined in the Belfast Agreement, the latter as a result of a quirk of UK electoral law. Citizens of EU countries which are not Ireland or in the Commonwealth are eligible to vote in local and devolved legislature elections only; immigrants from countries which fall into none of the above categories may not vote in any election. Contrary to popular belief, then, being eligible for one of those new blue passports is not a sine qua non when it comes to drawing a cross on a general election ballot paper. So why should only some non-British people get the vote, and not others?

The current system is unjust. Take the EU referendum in 2016: hundreds of thousands of EU citizens living in the UK could not vote in a referendum whose result irrevocably affected their status in this country. In contrast, hundreds of thousands Commonwealth citizens could. In this case, the asymmetry between some immigrants' voting rights and others' was unjustifiable and should have triggered reform. Unsurprisingly, no one batted an eyelid (though it later became Lib Dem policy to give EU citizens full voting rights). Pressed on the so-called 'Commonwealth anomaly' by right-wing pressure group Migration Watch UK in 2013, the Government had declared that 'the right to vote in UK elections for Commonwealth citizens who live here reflects our close historical ties with Commonwealth countries'. This statement reveals a great deal: even the Government views the ties between Britain and other Commonwealth countries are 'historical' because they simply no longer matter as much; not to mention that some of the more recent countries to join the Commonwealth have few to no 'historical ties' to Britain at all. So why the beefed-up voting rights? Britain surely has far more in common with Germany today than it does with India, for instance. *Cont. on page 9*

Implicit in the UK government's defence of our unfair electoral franchise is the suggestion that 'close historical ties' also make migrants from the Commonwealth more deserving of full integration into British society than migrants from elsewhere (since voting is the cornerstone of our liberal democracy, and enfranchisement the ultimate proof of inclusion). This is incredibly patronising at best and frankly xenophobic at worst.

Migration Watch UK suggest a quick and easy fix to the problems above: that anyone who is not British or Irish should be stripped of their right to vote in general elections. This proposition is unconscionable: removing a basic right such as the right to vote from large groups of people is regressive, not progressive and extremely illiberal. Instead, why not widen the electoral franchise so that all who make their home in the UK can enjoy the same right to shape its future? Such a solution is not unheard of — New Zealand removed the citizenship requirement for voting in general elections in 1975 and has never looked back. Widening the franchise in this way would enable those who have been locked out of British politics to enrich our democracy, which is at its best when it is at its most participative — and strengthen the liberal credentials of our society.

**Theo Jupp**  
*Secretary*

## *Housing Policy for a post-coronavirus Society*

Great innovation and success are sometimes borne of great disruption and adversity. This pandemic, then, is at the very least a time to question what innovation and change we need to agitate for, now the powers-that-be are well and truly disrupted. The answer for most people has been inequality, given that COVID-19 has thrown into sharp relief the fault lines along which inequality perpetuates. One particular aspect of inequality that has always enjoyed reasonable political salience which this crisis has uniquely made more important than ever is housing.

However, government policy around housing has seldom gone beyond simply promises for more. Moreover, whilst tax and spend policies, education policy and even health policy to some extent have all been recognised for their ultimate intercorrelation where inequality is concerned, housing policy is usually, and inexplicably, been missed off of this list. Evidence of the intercorrelation of other policies and the conspicuous absence of housing can be found in Sure Start, a policy seeking to reduce economic inequality by improving the life chances of children from low-income families, which has been the flagship or one of the flagship policies for children for every government since the turn of the last century. Sure Start aims to integrate health, education, parenting and public spending for a universalistic approach to child development. However, housing policy has never been integrated into Sure Start, or indeed any wider policies on inequality. This is an implicit mistake that policy must immediately rectify; poor housing conditions, overcrowding and homelessness have been found to be the cause of lifelong respiratory problems, tuberculosis, meningitis and long-term mental health issues in children. Poor housing also results in an incurable educational attainment gap which cannot be accounted for by parental income, family background, race, age or ability. Lifelong poor health and poor educational attainment themselves significantly dampen later economic security and greatly increase the chance of criminal convictions.

The advent of coronavirus has deepened the size and importance of the 'housing effect'. Lockdown will have greatly increased the amount of time children spend in bad housing; both during and post-lockdown social distancing will have limited access to the public services and remedial care systems that somewhat mitigate the effect of bad housing, and bad housing in and of itself results in an increased risk of contracting COVID-19 and contracting it fatally. Early evidence already indicates mental health deterioration have been greatest in those with pre-pandemic mental health issues and that school closures may have widened the attainment gap between low-income children and their peers by around 36%. Finally, overcrowded housing conditions have been strongly associated with a higher risk of infection by several studies, to the extent that is a strong predictor of infection rates and mortality rates in British cities and is at least partially the driver of higher BAME deaths from coronavirus.

Now more than ever, housing policy must be thoroughly integrated into policies concerning inequality. The knee-jerk policy reaction of 'build lots more houses' is admittedly necessary. A sharp under-supply of appropriate housing worsens the housing crisis every year; it is estimated that an additional 90,000 affordable social rented homes must be built each year for 10 years to completely meet England's housing need. Given this, current Liberal Democrat policy to build 300,000 new homes a year, 100,000 of which for social housing, is relevant and useful.

Whilst the policy could be criticised for its heavy opportunity cost to public spending, the policy is more than set to pay for itself. The costs of poor housing represent an annual £2.5 billion to the NHS due to the treatment of illnesses, injuries and long-term health conditions that arise from cold, damp, mould and architectural hazards. This is on top of the £1.1 billion that local councils in England alone spent on temporary accommodation for homeless households between April 2018 and March 2019.

However, policy instruments must be much sharper and more diverse than simply building more houses to truly tackle the housing crisis. Building an adequate number of homes for social rent means simply playing catch up to the forces of inequality. Several studies find that the leading cause of homelessness by far is rapid termination of contracts in the private rented sector. Government policy must therefore review tenants' rights and provide funding for housing advice and tenancy sustainment services. Integrating housing policy into the theory of change and goal outcomes of Sure Start would help realise the effects of this by plugging access to this advice into children's centres and workshops.

Further, loosening planning regulation to ensure that a greater number of homes can be build each year is often the opposite of useful; current government policy to allow disused commercial buildings as housing, for example, simply perpetuates unfit housing conditions. Setting targets to end overcrowding and engaging in a large-scale review of current quality and safety regulation for house-building is therefore necessary to ensure new builds do not simply perpetuate current problems. Further, far from stifling housing construction, well-designed legislation can actively reduce homelessness by increasing incentives to find tenants. Current Liberal Democrat policy to increase the council tax of homes left empty for more than six months by 500% is a good example of this.

Similarly, the 2014 Care Act requires signs of abuse in children and young adults to be reported under safeguarding but contains no equal requirement for reporting homelessness. Integrating housing concerns into the requirements of the Care Act would allow for a much more coordinated response from local government and remedial care services towards homelessness.

Housing policy has long been left out of wider policy packages for tackling inequality and has often not extended beyond simply building more houses. The coronavirus pandemic stands to worsen the impact of bad housing to the extent that neither of these are tenable any longer. Housing policy must include an integration of housing concerns into corollary policies such as the Care Act 2014 and Sure Start, as well as a review of current construction regulation to ensure that homes are built to modern standards or not built at all. This must of course, all correspond with a sustained and sharp increase in the amount of social housing being built every year. 'Build Back Better' is simply an empty promise without it.

**Damayanti Chatterjee**

*Ex-President*

## ***Racial Justice in Education***

Education remains a mechanism for social mobility and cultural integration and reproduction yet is also plays large part in systemic inequality within the UK. The curriculum, redesigned by Michael Gove, celebrated the achievements of the British Empire. At Oxford, Rhodes remains a monument to the exclusionary legacy of education many still face today. A new curriculum is needed to reflect a new society critical of its past in order to dismantle racism as a structural force within both education and wider society.

While racial and ethnic minority students are gaining ground in today's education system, a narrow curriculum and focus on 'fundamental British values' does a disservice to student present and future. This is further compounded by a lack of diversity among teachers, with 85.6 percent of teaches in state-funded schools being white, compared to only 2.2 percent being black. Disproportionately excluded, absent and lower attaining, a 'first-class education' remains to be denied to many. This is further seen in an underrepresentation in Russel Group Universities and in apprenticeships while simultaneously overrepresented in unemployment figures and in the prison system.

The calling of our country's past morality into question has been dismissed by some as 'erasing history'. Yet, it is impossible to erase a history not know. While many have individually made efforts to learn about has been ignored, this should be part of compulsory education. Students today should be exposed to a 'global curriculum' to reflect the world as it is today, whereas the current reflects the idea of 'splendid isolation'. Denying access to a wider range of subject and perspectives is a disservice to students. The creation of a 'global curriculum' would be the first, and most important, step towards dismantling systemic racial inequality within education and society. With the current Eurocentric curriculum, white students leave school with a sense of superiority while their BME peers leave in many cases feeling inferior. *Cont. on page 15.*

With racism being about power, it is easy to see how the education system remains part of systemic racism. White history is taught alone while all else is erased. Arguably, this is the cause of many of the inequalities within the education system: lack of engagement. Ironically, the curriculum designed to create fully assimilated, utilitarian citizens is the one that alienates them.

With current social climate and mass calls to ‘decolonise the curriculum’, there is no time greater than now to implement one. Only through tackling systemic at a educational level can it be dispersed to wider society. Methods attempting to force change such as quotas will only cause people to resent change further. Therefore, an organic method focused on education is what is needed.

**Joseph Rosalind-Hayat**

*President*



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