Title: To create a WE working group on technology and innovation in support of our core objectives and for a truly transformational politics

Proposed by: WE Steering Committee
Proposer: Athena Stevens

Type of motion: Policy Motion

Motion text:

1 Data inequality impacts women and diminishes the chances of achieving equal representation. Yet
2 new technologies also offer the opportunity for doing things differently and better.

3 This conference calls on the steering committee to create a technology and innovation working
4 group to develop not only policy and strategy around the impact and potential of tech as it relates to
5 our core objectives, but to explore ways of harnessing existing technologies and developing new
6 apps and approaches for creating and modelling change within the party and beyond.

7 The steering committee should ensure a cross-disciplinary range of skills and perspectives by co-
8 opting any policy or programming expertise necessary and inviting volunteers from the membership.
9 The group should report on a quarterly basis to the steering committee.

Motion rationale:

10 Revolutions often start with high ideals. They are going to liberate, empower, then end up betraying
11 the people who started them. The digital revolution was meant to free women from gender
12 discrimination. Online, disembodied, women would be judged for the quality of their thoughts alone.
13 Instead the internet has become a market place and amplifier for the sexualisation and
14 commodification of women. Now that revolution is entering another phase, and WE should not only
15 lead towards outcomes that benefit everyone but anticipate the challenges. This cuts across every
16 one of our core objectives.

17 WE know how essential data is to demonstrating inequality. Gender pay gap reporting, imperfect
18 though it is, has sparked an important debate.

19 Yet data inequality—the widening gulf between those organisations with ownership of or access to
20 large amounts of data—is also an urgent issue for us, as individuals and as a party. In any electoral
21 system, but especially first-past-the-post systems, money buys huge advantages. One key way is
22 through data. Parties with money to spend on services that gather and process huge amounts of data
23 about voters are able to target and tailor their resources in ways smaller parties cannot. This is not
24 democracy.

25   And there are many other ways WE members and supporters and the wider public may be negatively
26   affected. The lack of diversity in tech is reflected in products and services designed for small
27   segments of the population. Algorithms designed to replace fallible human decision-making risk
28   instead reinforcing the biases they are meant to avoid. As automation disrupts the jobs market,
29   women are on the sharp end of that change.

30   Anyone who uses computers or mobile phones or enters premises equipped with data technologies
31   generates clouds of personal data and metadata that is captured and used in ways that are reshaping
32   the world. WE aim to reshape the world. To do so, WE need not only to get to grips with emerging
33   technologies and issues but to provide leadership on them. To realise our core objectives, our policy-
34   making must not only respond to change, but anticipate and work to direct it. And WE have always
35   aimed to do politics differently and that must include our approach to tech. This cannot simply be
36   about mitigating the negative impacts and yawning inequalities or using technology to do old-style
37   politics more efficiently. Our working group on innovation and technology will explore new ways of
38   doing new things.

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