A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE LABOUR PARTY ELECTION MANIFESTO

In his introduction to the manifesto, Jeremy Corbyn comments: “Labour will rewrite the rules of the economy, so that it works for everyone. We will rebuild our public services, by taxing those at the top to properly fund the services we all rely on.”(introduction p2) The emphasis of this approach is about what a Labour government can do on behalf of the people in terms of the introduction of a radical measure of redistribution of wealth that will create the material conditions for the realisation of a situation of general prosperity and the overcoming of inequality. But this standpoint does not mean the end of capitalism and nor does it mean that the emphasis is on the importance of the initiative of the people in acting to define the character of their future. In other words what is being proposed is a conception of an elitist form of reformism in which the role of the Labour government is to be the active agency of a process of the modification of the character of the capitalist system in the interests of the welfare of the people. There is no suggestion that what is required is the replacement of the existing form of society with an alternative and emancipatory expression of the development of socialism. Instead it is assumed that the capitalist system can be made to work on behalf of the people because an enlightened government has acquired the domination of the political system and so is able to introduce a policy of reforms that will enable this development to occur. This approach seems to ignore the fact that the forces of capital and conservatism will act to try and undermine the introduction of reforms. In this context the only manner in which the programme of measures being proposed by the Labour government can be successfully introduced can be as a result of the mass mobilisation and action of the working class in support of this perspective. But this very development of a mass movement would then pose the issue of making further advances towards the realisation of a different and more emancipatory type of society. In other words, the choice would become between the continuation of capitalism or the realisation of a different and socialist type of society. But this is the choice that the Labour party does not seem to want to make because the election Manifesto is based on the understanding that the necessary reforms to improve society can be made within the capitalist system. In this manner the question of an alternative socialist system seems to be irrelevant. But the aspect that is ignored is that if the mass mobilisation of the people is required to ensure the successful realisation of the economic and political reforms being proposed in the Labour party manifesto, does not this situation imply the possibility to create a dynamic that will result in revolutionary type of change? But this is the very dynamic that is being rejected by the manifesto because it is assumed that the process of radical developments can occur exclusively in terms of the measures introduced in Parliament and that the result will be the inexorable transformation of society in a progressive manner. Thus it is being argued that the Labour party will introduce a ambitious investment programme, revitalise the public services, create a million based climate jobs, renationalise rail, water and energy, end food banks, introduce a real living wage of 10 pounds per hour, increase NHS funding and the claim is therefore made that wealth and power will be in the hands of the many and not the few. But what is ignored by this perspective is that this process of change cannot be satisfactorily realised in terms of the measures of a Labour government, what is also required is the mobilisation of the people in order to ensure that such measures are realised in an emancipatory and progressive manner. The point is that the dynamics of genuine social change requires a process of interaction between the role of a left-wing government and the aspirations and actions of the people. This is because the opposition of the forces of capital and conservatism to these measures has to be overcome and instead the balance of class forces has to be transformed so that the conditions for genuine change are created. If the people rely passively on the role of a government to act on their behalf it is quite possible that this will mean that the complexity of the parliamentary process can ensure that their increasingly ambitious aspirations, as expressed by the policies of the Labour government, are undermined by the complexities of the parliamentary process and the general opposition of the forces of capital to any possibility of reform. This is why only the conscious mobilisation of the working class on the basis of a determination to realise the reform measures of a left-wing Labour government can ensure that success in this context is achieved. But this is the very aspect that is ignored by Corbyn because he seems to consider that the progressive actions of a left-wing government in terms of the Parliamentary process is sufficient in order to realise his programme of reforms.

The actual issue is not that between a contrasting policy of socialism from above when compared to the alternative of socialism from below. Corbyn is not advocating measures that would result in the transformation of capitalism into a superior and different system of socialism. Instead he is committed to the improvement of capitalism in terms of the introduction of measures that would improve this system on the basis of the increased influence of principles of equality and the overcoming of the retrogressive effect of the period of austerity that was justified by the Conservative government. Thus, what is being advocated is the modification of the system in relation to the policies that will be introduced by a Labour administration. Thus, what is being suggested is that the actual character of capitalism can be progressively enhanced in terms of the role of a reform minded administration, and so the apparent dynamic of the role of reforms is sufficient in order to change the balance of power in favour of the interests of the people within society. But we have to ask are the reforms being proposed capable of brining about this type of change, and can it be assumed that the ruling elite will accept what is being proposed without developing forms of opposition to the measures of the Labour government? Hence it seems that what is being suggested is that a situation of consensus in favour of the measures being advocated by the Labour administration will acquire the necessary support because of their essential rational and sensible character. But this assumption ignores the importance of the role of interests. It is not in the interests of the ruling elite and the Conservative party to passively accept the introduction of measures that bring about changes to the economy in a manner that expresses the interests of the working class. As a result of this situation they will oppose the policies of a possible left-wing Labour government. In this context the only manner that can ensure the successful realisation of reforms is not simply by acquiring Parliamentary majorities in favour of these measures but also by the successful mobilisation and actions of the trade unions and the working class in general in order to ensure that the reforms are successfully implemented. But this development will then change the balance of power within society in favour of the possibility of challenges to the domination of capitalism. At this point will a Labour government be supportive of this dynamic or will it oppose it in the name of its illusory perspective of the objective of improving capitalism in a progressive manner? The point is that there is a potential tension or contradiction between the dynamics of a reform minded Labour government and the possibilities expressed by a working class that becomes mobilised in its support. In order to establish harmony in this situation requires that the Labour government becomes committed to supporting the logics of the dynamics of class struggle. This means that the limitations implied by the Labour manifesto become rejected and instead the Labour government acts in terms of the logic of an increasingly mobilised and militant working class. In this context the result could be the increasingly compatibility of what becomes a process of socialism from above with the role of socialism from below. Such a possibility is implicit in the character of the Labour manifesto because the measures that it proposes are not compatible with the continuation of capitalism. Thus, its aim of reforming capitalism in a progressive manner is an unrealistic objective that cannot be realised within the continued limitations of that system. Instead only the connection of the objectives of the Labour manifesto with a conscious and popular attempt to realise the alternative of socialism can ensure that its aims can be genuinely realised in an effective and principled manner. The point being made is that the policies of the Labour manifesto have an unrealistic aspect because they are based on the continuation of a capitalist system that is not a suitable basis for the implementation of these policies. Instead the only effective manner in which these reforms can be realised is by the successful attainment of a socialist system.

The manifesto outlines its general commitment to the environment in the following manner: “Labour led the UK parliament in declaring a climate and environmental emergency. The next Labour government will lead the world in fighting it, with a plan to drive up living standards by transforming our economy into one low in carbon, rich in good jobs, radically fairer and more democratic.”(Economy and energy p1) But if the capitalist system still continues then these admirable sentiments have little chance of being realised. The point is that the continuation of capitalism will generate a constant impetus for the connection of the imperatives of accumulation and growth with the continued detrimental effect on the environment. Only the creation of a different type of economic criteria which is based on the interests of the aims of ecological sustainability can ensure that the aims of the Labour manifesto in this regard can be realised. But such a possibility means the commitment to the ending of the capitalist system because only in this manner can the connection between the impetus for continual profitability and the deterioration of the environment be ended in terms of the establishment of different criteria for the organisation of the economy which is genuinely based on the interests of ecological sustainability. Hence the following aims of the Labour party require the necessity of a struggle to undermine the continued domination of capital which connects the interests of profit with the undermining of the interests of the environment: “That is why Labour will kick-start a green industrial revolution that will create one million jobs in the UK to transform, our industry, energy, transport and our buildings, whilst restoring nature. Our green new deal aims to achieve the substantial majority of our emissions reductions by 2030 in a way that is evidence-based. Just and that delivers an economy that serves the interests of the many and not the few.”(p2) This is a principled and supportable demand, but how can it be realised without an apparent definite commitment to the transformation of the balance of power within society that would make the possibility of socialism a genuine expression of this process of change? The point is that the continuation of capitalism continues to undermine the realisation of definite ecological aims for the improvement of the situation of the environment. In this context the feasibility of the realisation of ecological objectives cannot be defined in terms of honourable objectives and instead must be defined in terms of the importance of mass support for the process of the implementation of ecological aims by a government that will be opposed by the interests of capital. There will be an important ideological opposition to the implementation of environmental objectives in terms of the standpoint that such a policy is not economically efficient and that it will cost too much to realise. In this context the interest in ecological objectives cannot be limited to a few activists and the Labour government, but instead must become the concern of the majority of the people. There has to be a process of interaction which enables the development of a popular and mass basis for the ecological revolution to be realised. But instead it seems to be assumed that it only requires the role of the Labour government in order that the process of ecological change to be realised: “Just as the original industrial revolution brought industry, jobs and pride to our towns, Labour’s world leading Green industrial Revolution will rebuild them, with more rewarding, well-paid jobs, lower energy bills and whole new industries to revive parts of the country that have been neglected for too long.”(p2) But the problem with this perspective is that if the primary of the profit motive has not been replaced by the different logic od the importance of planning the economy to met social objectives, it is entirely possible that such a development could become based on the generation of new forms of industry that create ecological problems. The point is that as long as capitalism continues the impetus to create types of economic activity that have ecological issues will be continually generated. The only effective and definite manner in which this possibility can be overcome is to establish a type of economy which is based on the different logic of the realisation of human need and interests. This means a process of transition for the replacement of capitalism with socialism, but this is not what is being suggested by the Labour manifesto. Instead what is implausibly advocated is the transformation of capitalism so that it replaces the primary of the role of accumulation with the interests of society and related ecological concerns.

But in an ambiguous manner it is also implied that the ecological and other measures proposed by the Labour Party manifesto can only be realised in terms of the promotion of the importance of the influence of the working class within society: “We will work in partnership with the workforce and their trade unions in every sector of our economy, so that they lead the transition in their industries, creating new, good quality jobs and making sure that their extensive skills are passed on to the next generation of workers.”(p2) But how can such an aim be realised without the undermining of the domination of capital over the workers and so establishing a situation of workers management of the economy? The point is that the continuation of the supremacy of capital over labour can only undermine the ability to be able to achieve the ecological and social aims of the Labour government, and this point is implicitly accepted by the logic of the above comment. But in order to make this comment genuine and based on actual practice it will be necessary to genuinely establish workers management of the economy, and this means an end to the dominant influence of the role of capital within the relations of production. However, instead of this explicit objective the Labour Manifesto seems to be suggesting that what is required is an increased influence in the role of the workers but without ending the supremacy of the role of capital within the economy. But such a situation would only mean that the forces of capital would be able to reject the objectives of ecological and social change within the economy that is being proposed by the manifesto. This contradictory approach can only be resolved in a progressive manner by an explicit adherence to the view that what is required if the progressive aims of the Labour party manifesto are to be realised is the realisation of a situation in which the working class becomes the dominant social force within the economy. However, in order that this becomes a feasible possibility means that the trade unions have to reject the ambiguous limitations of the policy of the manifesto and instead be prepared to act in an independent and militant manner in order to realise genuine workers management within the economy. Such a development requires conscious rejection of the approach of class collaboration and compromise, and instead the workers have to be able to act in order to persuade the Labour government to accept that the realisation of their policies requires workers management of the economy. Any suggestion that it is possible to realise the aims of the Manifesto based on a situation of compromise between the forces of capital and labour has to be rejected. But this development requires the generation of class consciousness within the working class. Such a prospect cannot occur without the creation of a credible revolutionary party which can outline the reasons why the realisation of the Labour party manifesto requires the militant action of the workers. The influence of Marxism is important if the working class is to be able to recognise the limitations of the Labour party manifesto and in that context become to understand that militant action is important if the aims of the manifesto are to be realised in a successful manner. The ultimate expression of such a development is the realisation of workers management of the economy. If the workers remain passive and so do not act in an independent manner then the result will be that the Labour government only realises its manifesto in an incomplete and unsatisfactory manner, or in terms that accept the continuation of the domination of capital over labour. This is why militant and conscious action is necessary in order to facilitate a genuine process of change that undermines the continuation of the role of capital in relation to the working class. Only the workers can bring about an end to this situation and the most important aspect of such a possibility is the realisation of workers management of the economy. Only in this manner will the possibility of transition to socialism be able to occur. This is why it is necessary to reject the major illusion of the manifesto that the process of radical change can be guaranteed by the actions of the Labour government. Instead it is necessary to recognise that the reformist approach of the Labour manifesto expresses inherent limitations and problems that could result in the failure of the possibility to realise its objectives. The only manner in which this result can be avoided is for the workers to become conscious of the importance of independent and militant struggle to realise the objective of the transformation of the relations of power within society. This means conscious opposition to the domination of the economy by the forces of capital and instead the successful realisation of workers management of the economy.

But the Labour party manifesto connects its ecological objectives with the approach of class compromise as the following comment indicates: “Labour will create a Sustainable Investment Board to bring together the Chancellor, Business Secretary and Bank of England Governor to oversee, co-ordinate and bring together this investment – involving trade unions and business. We will ask the Office of Budget Responsibility to incorporate climate and environmental impacts into its forecasts so that the cost of not acting will be factored into every fiscal decision.”(p5) This conception of the cooperation between a Labour government and the institutions of the bourgeois state and economy is based on the emphasis that a situation of compromise and rational discussion between experts will be sufficient to promote the cause of ecological aims, and this will be connected to the creation of institutions like a National Transformation fund and a National Investment bank in order to uphold environmental objectives and to create financial and monetary support for ecological aims and job creation. But what is the basis of the ability to ensure that such objectives can genuinely be realised? The only answer to this question is to connect the process of the transformation of the state so that it is committed to ecological aims with the increased influence of the role of the working-class movement in terms of the actions of government. If the Labour government is forced to rely on the role of the state in an elitist manner, then the situation will be created that will continue to ensure that the realisation of its policies become undermined. Only if the labour government is genuinely accountable to the trade unions, via the increasing influence of the role of workers management, will it be possible to ensure that progressive intentions become translated into actual practice. But without this interaction of a Labour government with the working-class movement it is quite possible that the various actors within the state apparatus will act to undermine the ability to realise radical ecological policies. It will be argued that such policies undermine the interests of the economy, or that they are wasteful and too expensive. In this context only the genuine influence of the role of an effective expression of workers management within the economy will be able to ensure that the ecological and social objectives of the Labour government become successfully realised.

But instead of this perspective there seems to be the naïve illusion that a Labour government will be able to independent challenge the influence of capitalism, and so ensure that the forces of capital act in accordance with progressive objectives: “Just 100 companies globally are responsible for the majority of carbon emissions. We won’t be afraid to tackle this wanton corporate destruction by taking on the powerful interests that are causing climate change. We will change the criteria a company must meet to be listed on the London Stock Exchange so that any company that fails to contribute to tackling the climate and environmental emergency is delisted.”(p6) This formal expression of the importance of government legislation does not seem to allow for the significance of the economic powers of the most important companies which are causing ecological problems. The problem is that the whole system of the world economy upholds the influence and significance of these companies and so they can defy the attempt by any government to introduce environmentally friendly legislation and penalties for companies that try to reject the implementation of these measures. In this context a policy of conciliation of the most important enterprises can only be futile and so what is called for is the introduction of genuinely stringent measures. The only manner in which this issue can begin to be tackled is by the development of a situation in which the character of the national economy is no longer based on the primary importance of the role of the domination of capital over labour. In this context an economy that was based on the connection of the importance of social need and ecological concerns could be created. But this is not what is being proposed by the Labour party which instead insists that the aims of the interests of the environment can be realised by a process of the modification but not the end of the role of capitalism. Thus, an approach of reforms can ensure that the objective of ecological intentions can be established. But the point is that this understanding seems to neglect the apparent fact that it is the very character of capitalism which has led to the undermining of the ability of society to be able to uphold the interests of the environment, and so this apparent fact seems to express the importance of the aim of socialism. But this is the very perspective that is being rejected in the political approach of the manifesto. What is not recognised is that only the ending of the domination of capital can establish the economic and social conditions for the ability to be able to facilitate the ability of society to establish serious ecological objectives. Instead it is being suggested that a Labour government will be able to create the institutions like a Local Transformation Fund and Regional Development banks that will be able to fund ecological projects and to ensure the character of the economy becomes defined in ecological terms. But the point is that such aspirations can only have any chance of success if there has been a process of political transformation in which the balance of power between the forces of capital and labour has been radically transformed. Only when the working class is able to ensure that these institutions for the promotion of ecological objectives are able to express the ability to realise the aims of improving the environment will genuine success in this context be realised. But this possibility is problematical unless there has been an emphatic process of change within society. But this is not what the Labour party manifesto is proposing because it instead assumes that such developments can occur within an improved and what has become a progressive type of capitalism.

In a limited manner the above criticism is actually acknowledged when it is accepted that the process of progress in ecological concerns requires the extension of public ownership of utilities like water: “We will put people before profit by bringing our energy and water systems into democratic public ownership. In public hands, energy and water will be treated as rights rather than commodities, with any surplus reinvested or used to reduce bills. Communities themselves will decide, because utilities won’t be run from Whitehall but by service users and workers.”(p8) Thus: “Public ownership will secure democratic control over nationally strategic infrastructure and provide collective stewardship for key natural resources.”(p8) But the point is that this development whilst supportable can only be of limited significance if this is limited to the public ownership of a few companies in the energy sector. Such organisations will be restricted by the influence and importance of the continuation of capitalism in the general context. Hence what is required in order to ensure that this development is effective would be the public ownership of the major sectors of the economy under workers control and in that manner the economic conditions would be created in order to ensure that it is possible to establish the basis for the organisation of the economy in a manner that enabled the possibility to establish the feasible conditions for the realisation of the aims of the process of the nationalisation of the energy and water industry. But if the energy and water industry is nationalised in the situation of the continued domination of the role of private enterprise the situation will be created for the generation of the possibility to undermine the ability to realise the possibility of the aims of ecological concerns. Instead the character of the isolated aspects of public ownership would continue to be defined by the imperatives of the situation of the domination of private enterprise within the economy. But there is an idealist assumption that the aspects of the role of the limited public sector would provide an inspiration for the role of the private enterprise, and so in that manner transform the character of the economy in terms of the increasing importance of the ideals of cooperation and solidarity. This is an illusion. However, despite these limitations it is also necessary to support the limited extension of nationalisation that is being advocated in this context. This is because despite the problems outlined above the increased role of public ownership on the basis of the increased important role of the workers could provide an example to the rest of the workers within the economy. The argument would be that the increased development of public ownership on the basis of the role of the working class within that sector is an example that should be extended to the rest of the economy. In that manner it is important that the workers aspire to create the economic conditions for the success of the process of nationalisation of water and energy industries. Within the limitations of the levels of public investment in these industries the workers should attempt to indicate the advantages and superiority to their new situation of increased control within this part of the public sector. In this manner the argument will have been made in a practical manner for the development of the public ownership of the whole of the economy.

In other words, it would be a sectarian error for Marxists and groups of workers to reject the importance of the reforms proposed by the Labour manifesto because of their inherent limitations. Instead despite the problems associated with the various reform measures, they should be supported as expressing the possibility for the development of a process of movement to the realisation of more radical forms of change. Thus, the nationalisation of the water industry with enhanced involvement of the role of the workers should be critically supported because it could provide the workers of this sector with the possibility to realise the superior of forms of workers control in practice. Such a development would then become the basis of an argument in favour of the creation of an economy based on the principles of public ownership and workers management. Hence it would be a sectarian error to reject the various aspects of the Labour manifesto because of their given limitations. Instead aspects like public ownership of water and energy have to be supported because what could be possible is the possibility to create the economic and political conditions for the development of forms of expression of the capacity of the workers to be able to express the capacity to be able to organise these sectors despite possible limitations. In other words what is being created could be a precedent that should be the basis for its emulation in terms of the potential for the overall development of the character of the economy on the basis of workers management. This would not be the intention of the Labour government which is why the working class would have to take the initiative in order to facilitate this possibility. It is necessary that militant and conscious activity occurs that would create the conditions for the generation of the development of a process in which the limited nationalisation of water could become the basis of more ambitious developments such as activity and agitation in favour of the establishment of workers management within the economy in general. This possibility is why it would be an error to reject the nationalisation of the water and energy industries as being of an insufficient character because this very development could become the basis of more ambitious possibilities. However, even if this potential is not realised it would still be necessary to support the nationalisation of water because of the very importance of the example that would be created by the public ownership of a utility and the significance of the precedent that could be expressed by the increased involvement of the workers in the organisation and administration of a sector of the economy.

The Manifesto is committed to the principles of tackling climate change and making the economy based on the realisation of ecological principles. These aims should be supported unconditionally but the problem is that this perspective is again based on the view that the good intentions of the Labour government can be realised because of its honourable intentions. This ignores the importance of the necessity to transform the character of the economy if ecological concerns are to be seriously realised. The problem that is ignored is that the issue of indifference to the importance of the environment is located with the approach of Conservative governments and so the significance of the role of capitalist economy is effectively ignored. But it is the dynamics of capital accumulation which have created the importance of ecological issues. This is why the primary basis for the development of a serious intention to resolve these questions requires a process of progress towards the realisation of socialism. Hence it is not sufficient to argue in favour of a progressive Labour government that still upholds the role of the capitalist system. But the approach of the Labour manifesto is that the progressive objectives it has outlined can be realised within the present economic and political system because of the important transforming character of the role of reforms. However, historical experience has indicated the problematical character of reforms and this point is also indicated by the attempt to connect ecological change to what is possible within the capitalist system. This standpoint seems to ignore the fact that it is the very imperatives of capital accumulation that create the tendency for ecological issues to be created because of the problems associated with unorganised industrialisation and the effects of pollution. Only with an economy in which the principles of need and equality are primary will it be possible to begin to tackle the important aspects of environmental improvement. This standpoint is not unrealistic or rigid because the inauguration of measures to improve the environment by a Labour government are to be welcomed, but they can only represent a situation of beginning to transform the ecological situation. These policies can only be the basis to inaugurate consistent change in connection to an understanding that consistent development in this context requires the genuine transformation of the character of the economy and of society.

It will be argued that this position is rigid and unrealistic because people will not have voted in favour of the socialist transformation of society. This objection has validity, but the point is that even the most modest policies of a Labour government cannot be realised without the development of a definite process of the transformation of society in a socialist manner. Hence, it is necessary to convince supporters of a Labour administration of the importance of a process of transition to socialism if the objective of the realisation of the measures proposed by the Labour manifesto are to be consistently and successfully realised. This point applies to the issue of ecology because the capitalist class will object to this objective of improving the environment as being detrimental to the interests of the economy. They will attempt to postpone the introduction of radical measures to improve the environment if they are perceived to be undermining the interests of capitalism. This is why even the most modest proposal to improve the environment can only be realised in terms of the definite development of a process of change that attempts to transform the present domination of capitalism into the creation of a socialist society. But instead of this perspective the Manifesto tries to emphasise the connection between the interests of capital and ecological transformation. For example: “A thriving steel industry will be vital to the Green Industrial revolution. Labour will support our steel through public procurement, taking action on industrial energy prices, exempting new capital from business rates, investing in R and D, building three new steel recycling plants and upgrading existing production sites.”(p10) The proposed investment in steel industries is welcome, but the point is does this mean that the interests of capital and labour are essentially identical? This seems to be the view of the Manifesto because it is suggested that state encouraged investment in these types of important sectors are the basis of economic growth that will benefit all of society. But the problem is that the profitable aspirations of most companies implicitly reject the importance of increasing employment and improving wages of workers and instead tend to try and create enterprises based on few workers. In this manner the objective of a Labour government for a high wage economy with full employment could be undermined. The only genuine possibility to oppose such developments is to promote the consistent realisation of workers management of the economy. But such an objective would mean that the attempt to reconcile the interests of capital and labour as outlined in the Manifesto is an illusion. It could be argued that this criticism is an expression of Marxist dogmatism because it is quite possible to reconcile the interests of capital and labour in the context of the important and progressive role of a Labour government. But the problem is that the objectives of the Labour manifesto are based on the assumption that the forces of capital and labour can agree around a collection of policies that would be as an expression of mutual interest. But the problem with this conception is that it ignores the fact that the very character of capital is based on the necessity of the exploitation of labour. Furthermore, this objective can be achieved increasingly in terms of the role of a few highly specialised companies and so does not require a situation of genuine full employment of the members of society. Hence the aim of a high waged and fully employed labour force that is outlined in the Manifesto can never be the objective of the supporters of the interest of capital. Indeed, an understanding of this aspect of economic actuality is why the Manifesto makes the vague pledge to ensure the development of a high wage economy, and to provide investment in important areas of new technology, particularly those that sustain the principles of ecological sustainability. But where is the Labour government to obtain the financial resources necessary in order to fund an expensive investment programme? The ultimate answer to this question is in terms of an implicit recognition of the necessity to borrow funds from the financial markets. But such a perspective is based on the possibly naïve assumption that the markets will be willing to fund the projects of a left-wing Labour government. If such funds are not made available this would seem to be the basis for the undermining of the realisation of the policies of the manifesto. But what is not recognised by this perspective is that the issue of the resources for economic development could be resolved if the forces of labour effectively expropriated the industries of capital. If labour become responsible for the realisation of wealth in a direct manner because they had become the major and influential force in the creation and distribution of wealth then this would mean that the result would be the ability for the organisation of resources in a manner that benefitted the interests of the workers and of society in general. But the Labour manifesto is not proposing to end the situation in which the labour of workers is to the benefit of the interests of capital. However, such a situation actually means that it is problematical for the workers to be able to directly organise the utilisation of economic wealth in the interests of themselves in particular and of society in general.

These criticisms are not meant to suggest that there is nothing worthwhile in the Labour manifesto. Of particular importance is the concept of the Climate Apprenticeship policy, which would aim to encourage the development of an ecologically based apprenticeship scheme. But the constant problem is how will it be possible to realise these types of projects given the present situation of the continued crisis of capitalism and the related limits imposed by austerity. It is interesting that in this context the Manifesto seems to have no considered analysis of how the situation of austerity is to be replaced by one based on economic growth and increased public expenditure. Instead there is merely the subjective assumption that the enlightened approach of a Labour government will enable then to tackle these types of issues. Nor is there any discussion of what is occurring within the world economy and of how that would influence the internal policy of a Labour government. Instead it is assumed that the vey election of the Labour party into political power will enable it to implement its policies based on the attributes of determination and principle. This standpoint could represent naïve assumptions and above all it is based on the refusal to discuss the importance of the limitations that will be imposed by the continuation of the capital-labour relation within the UK. Hence the very attempt to express a realistic policy could ultimately be of a naïve character because of the unwillingness to discuss the problems that could arise in the attempt to implement it. Hence the role of Marxists is to suggest in what may seem to be a paradoxical manner that the only feasible and realistic manner in which the manifesto can be realised is to connect its demands with the revolutionary understanding of the necessity to genuinely transform society in a socialist manner. What is actually unrealistic is the attempt to combine the continuation of capitalism with the advocacy of radical demands. Instead of this genuinely unrealistic approach, the issue of how the reforms in the manifesto can be realised is connected to the perspective of the revolutionary transformation of society. This must mean that the problem of the limitations imposed by capitalism can only be seriously and practically tackled in terms of the genuine mobilisation of the workers in opposition to the continuation of the capitalist system. But it is this very perspective which is effectively being rejected by the authors of the Labour manifesto, and so it is the task of revolutionary Marxists to indicate this limitation.

The manifesto also outlines the aim of developing public transport and the intention to renationalise the railways. These aims are welcome and would contribute to the development of the ability to realise a sustainable and ecologically friendly form of transport system. This is because such an approach is connected to the attempt to create new types of ecologically based transport that does not undermine the interests of the environment whilst being able to realise the needs of the people for forms of transport. But such an approach is based on the view that the dominant aspect of the process of management of these new forms of public transport is with either the national or local government. There is no mention of the necessity and importance of the development of types of workers management. Instead it is assumed that progressive forms of local and national government are sufficient in order to realise the objectives of the manifesto. But already some forms of local public transport have been based on the creation of cooperatives that involve the workers in the organisation and management of these organisations. Surely it would be logical and principled to extend these developments in a national manner and to establish what would be a democratically based transport system. The most efficient basis for the organisation of the railways would be the expertise and knowledge of the workers who are involved in the running of this form of transport system and so this development would actually involve the creation of an efficient system that was able to realise the interests of the customers in terms of the role of cheap fares and effective forms of service. But such observations are not made because the overall assumption of the manifesto is that the role of the management of a given enterprise like the railways is still the most efficient manner in which the organisation of the industry can be established. In this context there is no mention of the importance of the trade unions for the management and administration of the railways. This omission is an indication that the approach of the manifesto still effectively rejects the importance of the development and realisation of the principles of socialism from below.

The manifesto makes a welcome commitment to the ecological aims of upholding the role of green areas and parks and the objectives of upholding the aim of realisation of the intention to establish clean air within a given number of years. These are all important objectives but the fact that the manifesto does not intend to promote the demise of capitalism indicates that there is a contradictory approach that is difficult to uphold these types of objectives. This is because the continuation of capitalism means that the imperatives to establish and realise definite ecological objectives will continue to be undermined by the imperatives of economic growth and the accumulation of capitalism. Only the establishment of a different system based on different objectives can establish a more favourable basis for the realisation of these types of aims. The point being made is that there is a contradiction between aspirations and practical feasibility which would seem to imply that these types of ecological objectives cannot be realised in a practical manner. Hence there is a distinction between objectives and the prospect of their practical realisation. Also, these types of objectives require the support and cooperation of other countries, and the continuation of capitalism in other parts of the world means that green type of objectives could be undermined by the imperatives of the international character of the process of capital accumulation. To some extent it will be possible to establish new parks and green areas, but the aim of clean air will be difficult because of the problems that will be caused by the continuation of capitalism.

However, the aim of providing sustainable food for everyone, and ending the necessity of food banks within three years is a supportable and feasible aim, even for a government that will still be acting within the limitations of capitalism. There is plenty of surplus food that people cannot obtain because they are unable to afford it. This is why the establishment of a National Food Commission to review this situation and to make recommendations about the necessity for the provision of cheap and quality food for everyone is an important and principled aim. It is also recognised that this objective is connected to the realisation of the increased influence of the role of farmers and workers: “We will put farmers, food producers and workers at the heart of our plans for delivering healthy food locally. We will support local food networks, expand access to farm holdings and ensure rights of union representation for all food and agricultural workers.” (p17) But can any of these aims be realised without the nationalisation under workers management of the major supermarket companies that presently have the ability to dominate the markets for the provision of food? The point is that the continuation of the domination of these organisations means that the ability to provide people with access to cheap and nutritious food will be undermined by a situation in which these organisations still have the ability and power to impose prices of food products based on the aim of making the highest profits. However, it would not be a progressive measure to merely end the domination of these supermarkets. Instead it would be a more constructive development to ensure that their levels of organisation and expertise are incorporated within the nationalised organisations. This possibility can be ensured by incorporating the role of the managers of the supermarket organisations within the new public sector organisations. In this manner the aspect of expertise and levels of organisation will still be continued in terms of the development of new forms of organisation that are able to meet the needs of the consumer in a more efficient and equitable manner.

The next section of the manifesto is that entitled: “Rebuild our Public Services”. There is a general and welcome commitment to the necessity to end the period of the decline of public services and to instead ensure that their development occurs. But the important question that arises is how, will improvements, and the transformation of the public sector, occur in terms of a modest increase in income tax will not be able to realise the funds necessary. The only resolution of this issue is to implicitly accept the necessity of large scale borrowing of funds from the financial markets. It is argued that the improvements of services such as in relation to schools, hospitals, care homes and council housing will cost 150 billion. This cannot be realised in terms of the modest increase in income tax that is being proposed. Nor is it suggested that important expropriations of the wealth of the largest companies would occur in order to help finance this programme. Instead the figures provided do not provide a valid expression of the ability to provide funds for this ambitious and needed programme of the transformation of public services. Instead only the expropriation of the forces of capital would facilitate the ability to be able to provide the necessary funds. But this is not what is being suggested because the assumption is that such changes can occur within the limitations of the capitalist system. But the actual objective of the creation of effective and efficient public services means that the issue of the domination of capital, and the fact that its forces have the monopoly of wealth, has to be resolved. But this is the very issue that is avoided by the manifesto because of the dogmatic view that these types of important changes can occur within the limits of the capitalist system. Instead in a vague and moralistic manner the manifesto indicates the importance of the role of the people that work within the public services, and so it is implied that this aspect is sufficient to bring about the necessary transformation of their role. But the point is that such an objective cannot be realised without a change in the balance of power within both the public services and society in general. But this is the very aspect that is being denied by the manifesto because of the adherence to the rigid and dogmatic assumption that the changes being advocated can occur within the limits of capitalism. The objective is to make capitalism progressive and based on the primacy of social objectives. Such an approach is supportable to the extent that a serious attempt is made to try and realise this standpoint. But it cannot achieve consistent success without the promotion of the necessary and related objective of the genuine transformation of the balance of class forces within society. Indeed, in a vague manner it is accepted that this type of objective has been in a limited manner by the realisation of the National Health Service which because of its ability to provide a public and free service is socialism in action. But this would seem to logically imply that the ability of the NHS to provide and meet the needs of society would suggest that its principles should be extended to the rest of society. The problem with this apparent assumption is that the character of the NHS has a specific character that would seem to be difficult to apply to the rest of society that is based on the private ownership of the means of production. This is the very reason why the NHS has been an exception when compared to the rest of the sectors of society. However, if the role of the NHS is to be extended to the rest of society this would mean that the principles of public ownership would have to be encouraged and supported by the role of a Labour government. In this manner the principles of need and not profit would become the basis of the character of the economy. However, the objection would be made that the NHS is not like the rest of the economy and that instead it is based on the realisation of the specific health needs of the people. Indeed, the problem has been that the influence of the principles of private profit have been an undermining influence on the activity of the NHS. Therefore, if the proposals of the Labour manifesto concerning the NHS are to acquire credibility it must be able to indicate in an effective manner that this situation can be overcome by the successful ability to extend the ability of the NHS to meet the needs of the people. But the question arises as to whether this aim can be successfully realised given the limits imposed by the capitalist system.

The manifesto is committed to an increasing of expenditure on the NHS of around 4% per year and an end to all aspects of the privatisation of services. The standard of care will be improved and the situation of social care for the elderly will be improved. Over 3 billion will be spent improving facilities and the conditions of mental health services and expenditure will include that is related to the needs of young people. Measures will also be taken to provide resources to tackle serious health problems and for guidance about how such issues can be tackled. The good intentions have the issue as to how these actions can be properly costed and supported by the genuine increase of resources. The point is that the many aspirations that the Labour manifesto has in relation to the improvement of health services express the problem as to how this aim can be properly funded by the genuine increase of resources. The major issue is that the proposed increase in funding is an issue in relation to the many other services that the manifesto outlines, such as education. What will decide that the priority is health versus education or is it possible to making such a harsh choice? The point being made is that choices will be inevitably imposed on a government if the system of capitalism remains and so as a result the issue of scarce resources becomes important because of the imposition of the harsh demands of the system of private ownership. The only manner in which this issue can be resolved in a progressive manner is for genuine advance to be made towards the realisation of socialism which would enable the government to be able to make the necessary financial choices that would enable the genuine financial support for the NHS to occur. But instead it is implied that the possible to improve and develop the NHS can occur in an effective manner within the continued limitations of capitalism. This view is surely problematical and increased funding of the NHS in these circumstances would seem to suggest that additional monetary support for other public services would become problematical. But such problems are not discussed within the manifesto and instead in what seems to be a dogmatic manner the issue of increased monetary support for the NHS is outlined in a manner that implies that there is not a possible important monetary problem to resolve.

The same type of promises is made about education in the section national education (p13-37) This outlines a commitment to free education in the spheres of technical, vocational, academic and creative. Local authority involvement in the process of education will be enhanced and improved, and education for all people will be developed and tuition fees will be abolished in relation to higher education. But the same issue arises in relation to relating good intentions to the possibility of realisation. It is an important fact that there is no mention of the involvement of the teachers and pupils in the process of the transformation of the character of education. Instead the proposals are outlined in terms of the implementation of measures by the Labour government in an exclusive manner. But the point is that it requires the participation of teachers and students if these measures are to become an effective success. In this context it would be a feasible aim to promote the ability of teachers to become the effective administrators of school and have an involvement in the formation of the process of exams and the nature of qualifications. Instead of this perspective there is still an elitist understanding that the character of education is based on the introduction of measures by the government. This standpoint seems to deny the importance of the role of the staff of educational institutions in the organisation and development of the educational services. In other words, the issue is about the principles of democratisation as the basis of efficiency and the improvement of services. It is not possible to bring about a process of transformation of the effectiveness of education if there is not an effective involvement of the role of teachers and students in the process of the improvement of its capacity to be able to met the needs and requirements of the users of these services.

It is also argued that the role of policing should be improved in terms of the creation of thousands of new police officers and this standpoint is summed up in the following manner: “We will retain local democratic accountability for police forces and reform the police funding formula to ensure sufficient, sustainable resources are fairly allocated.”(Police and Security p21 of previous section) But this is a vague and brief conception of what is a crucially important point. The major reason that the relations between police forces and the various communities that they serve is often of a problematical character is because of the lack of genuine accountability of these forces to the communities that they attempt to serve. The mechanism of trust between police and community needs to be strengthened so that the efficiency and effectiveness of the police is enhanced in a mutually beneficial manner. If the police become genuinely accountable for their actions, then this will improve their ability to ensure that their actions are satisfactory for the communities that they act on behalf of. But this development should mean that what is occurring is a genuine process of consultation between representatives of local communities such as councillors and the activity of the police. In this manner the task of upholding the interests of people is made compatible with the aims of establishing genuine realisation of the ability of the police to act in an accountable manner.

The position on international relations is outlined by the manifesto in the following manner: “We will use our diplomatic services, our aid budgets and our international standing to promote peaceful solutions to conflicts and tackle the risks arising from poverty, natural catastrophes and population displacements. Our national security is linked to global threats We will respect international law and avoid needless military interventions.” (p23) This stance implies that the role of the UK government should be to act as an honest broker or mediator in the many international conflicts that may arise and to promote the possibility of peace and international harmony. This is an admirable aim, but it ignores the issues that result in various forms of international tension and what should be the basis to resolve them. We would suggest that the major reason for the development of forms of conflict is because of the inequality within the world and the role of reactionary forces in trying to resolve such issues in a manner that is opposed to the realisation of the aims of democracy and equality. Hence it is not adequate that the UK government acts as a mediator in relation to the development of international tensions and instead should support the attempts of the various peoples of the world to realise a situation of peace and prosperity. But this objective would mean the promotion of the development of the successful realisation of socialism in international terms. The role of the UK Labour government should act as the leadership of the attempt to facilitate the realisation of peace, prosperity and progress. This would mean being an active opposition to all forms of reactionary ideologies that in various forms perpetuate the exploitation and oppression of people. In this context the attempt to realise global democracy would be an important aim of the Labour government, and it would attempt to establish international allies for this perspective. But what this would mean would be the advance of the aim of democracy and socialism, and so in this sense the perpetuation of good diplomatic relations between countries is not adequate. Instead the UK government would attempt to establish allies within the people of the world who shared its aspirations to achieve peace and equality. This aim would mean that the UK government would be in opposition to the objectives of the various American administrations that are based on the interests of global capitalism. This does not mean opposing the aspirations of the American people, but it does mean opposing the various policies of American governments that advocate the interests of capital instead of the genuine aspirations of the peoples of the world.

But in order to be able to promote this type of policy requires that genuine change to a socialist type of society be achieved in the UK. This would enable the possibility to be able to advocate and act in accordance with the internationalist stance of upholding the interests of working people on an internationalist basis to be able to establish a situation in which their aspirations can be realised. But if capitalism remains in the UK then the most realistic development is that the interests of this reactionary system will be upheld with the result that the interests of the people of the world will not be advocated and advanced. Hence the issue of the possibility to realise genuine internationalism requires that the formation of a left wing government in the UK that is able to uphold a standpoint of solidarity with the peoples of the world in an effective manner, and not merely in terms of its formal intentions. This means genuine support and encouragement for all the various peoples that are opposing situations of oppression and domination. But instead of this genuinely progressive approach all that is implied by the views of the manifesto is that the Labour government would act with others to resolve issues of dispute with the world. What does this mean and how would it advance the cause of progress? It would be more principled and coherent to contend that the manifesto and a possible Labour government would support all those that are striving to achieve peace and equality in international terms. Instead what seems to be a primary aim is the ambiguous policy that what is of primary importance is to resolve situations of international tension. This point needs to be clarified and related to the important aim of the realisation of the interests of all oppressed peoples in international terms.

The manifesto also has a welcome commitment to the renewal of the dynamism of local services and the nationalisation of the post office. But there does not seem to be any promise of the restoration of the previous levels of local government expenditure of the period before the imposition of austerity. But the promise of the renewal of the effectiveness of the services provided by local government does at least provide an implicit promise of the importance of the development of the effectiveness and importance of the role of the functions of local authorities. But what would be important would be to outline the role that local communities could have in the expression of the ability to be able to enhance and development the importance and effectiveness of the services that are provided in relation to the role of local government. It would also be a welcome addition if the manifesto outlined how to improve the participation of people in relation to local libraries and parks, and in that manner indicated the potential for the role of local services to become something that are increasingly administered in an effective manner by communities in relation to the continued influence of experts and specialists. In other words, a problem of the Manifesto is that it assumes that the process of the organisation and development of services is merely the expression of the role of progressive minded experts and so the importance of the influence of the people is not outlined in a systematic and satisfactory manner. This limitation should be tackled by the development of the influence of the people in relation to the organisation of services. Only in this manner can they be made to be a genuine success.

The manifesto outlines in the section ‘Tackle Poverty and Inequality’ that it makes a commitment to a ten pounds per hour minimum wage and the support for the aim of the development of share ownership in companies by workers: “We will give workers a stake in the companies that they work for – and a share of the profits that they help to create by requiring companies to set up Inclusive Ownership Funds (IOFs). Up to 10% of a company will be owned collectively by employees, with dividend payments distributed equally among all, capped at £500 a year, and the rest being used to top up the Climate Apprenticeship Fund. The cap will rise to ensure that no more than 25% of dividends raised by IOFs are redistributed in this way.”(Tackle Poverty and Inequality p4) But this perspective of the diffusion of share ownership to the workers raises the importance of the necessity to connect this policy to the enhancement of the ability of the workers to have an effective role in the management of the companies. The development of increased share ownership does not in itself bring about the possibility for the workers to be able to create a situation in which they are able to influence in an effective manner the organisation of the process of economic activity. What should be promoted is the ability of workers to be able to elect the managers of a given enterprise or service, and this process should be based on the increased influence of the role of the trade unions. Only in this manner would it become possible to develop the genuine ability of the workers to be able to influence the character of the development of economic activity in their interests and that of society in general. However, in an indirect manner there is recognition of the importance of the principle of the increased influence of the role of the workers within the economy and society. It is contended that: “We are proud of the trade unions movement’s historic achievements in giving people a voice at work through collective action. It is not just part of our history; it is also part of our future. Only by shifting the balance of power back towards the workers will be achieve decent wages, security and dignity at work.” (p5) But what is the content of this understanding that goes beyond the role of limited reforms? Is the aim of genuine workers management of the economy being advocated? There are the proposals that represent genuine possible advances such as the claim that the interests of working people will be represented within the government in terms of the creation of a Ministry of Employment Rights. This is connected to a understanding that the character of collective bargaining should be connected to a promotion of the rights of workers: “We will start to roll out sectoral collective bargaining across the economy, bringing workers and employers together to agree legal minimum standards on a wide range of issues such as pay and working hours, that every employer in the sector must follow. Sectorial collective bargaining will increase wages and reduce inequality. This will also stop good employers being undercut by bad employers.” (p5) But such a perspective only has the ambition to modify and improve the character of the present relations between workers and capitalists. To the extent that it can be realised it would express a constructive development, but the only ultimate manner in which the interests of the workers can be advanced is by the creation of the possibility to create the ability of the workers to be able to manage the economy. If this development does not occur, then the antagonistic interests between the role of capital and labour will not be resolved. There is the possibility of progress in that the measures proposed by the manifesto doe amount to the process of change towards the increased influence of the role of the working class within the relations of production. But the continued problem will be that the domination of capital within the process of production is not being tackled, challenged and so transformed. This means that what is being suggested is that the working class should be satisfied with the measures being proposed by the Labour government to improve the character of the relations between capital and labour. But ultimately this will create tensions because the forces of capital will not be satisfied by measures that seem to undermine its interests and the workers will ultimately aspire to the realisation of a situation in which they have more effective control over production. Instead in what could be an untenable manner the Labour manifesto is trying to reconcile what could be understood as the genuinely antagonistic interests of the role of capital and labour.

 In other words, the major assumption being made is that it is possible to reconcile the interests of capital and labour in terms of the influence of the role of legislation and the creation of a situation of goodwill and the willingness to compromise by both sides. But this is an illusion given the actual importance of a situation of antagonism in relation to the contrasting interests of capital and labour. It would be more principled and realistic to outline a perspective that would advance the ability of the forces of labour to uphold their interests and to therefore support a perspective that would be based on the realisation of the aim of workers management of the economy. Instead there is an emphasis on the intention of increasing the influence of workers within the process of production, such as increasing wages by effective collective bargaining and enhanced employment rights, that would seem to suggest that such measures would be sufficient in order to uphold the interests of the workers within the process of production. But there is an important contradiction because some of the objectives of the manifesto must imply the undermining of the domination of capital over labour. This point is particularly relevant given the manifesto is explicit about the necessity to defend the role of the trade unions in the workplace. The manifesto makes the commitment to uphold the possibility for trade unions to conduct workplace ballots, to end restrictions on the possibility of industrial action, to strengthen trade union ability to recruit, to support union members against the possibility of unfair dismissal, repeal anti-trade union legislation including the Trade Union Act of 2016, facilitate the ability to recognise unions in the workplace, and facilitate the right of union representatives to carry out their duties. But the logical result of these policies would be to enhance the very potential for the unions to promote the possibility and feasibility of workers management of production. This point is also indicated by the aim to realise a shorter working week of 32 hours without any reduction in wages within a decade. It will only be possible to realise this objective if the unions are able to increase their power within the process of production. Only the necessary and logical changes within the balance of power within the workplace will enable these types of progressive demands to be realised in an effective manner. Therefore, if such measures are formally introduced in a legislative manner and yet the balance of power between capital and labour is not altered then such changes will be of a formal character, and so will not be effectively realised. But the manifesto emphasises a reliance by a Labour government on the role of an Independent Working Time Commission in order to ensure that measures like the reduction of working hours occurs. This is a naïve view that ignores the necessity of a genuine change in the balance of power between capital and labour within the process of production.

The ultimate illusory view in the Manifesto is that what is required in the transformation of relations between the forces of capital and labour is a policy of the promotion of what could be defined as ethical capitalism. It is suggested that: “Labour will take on short termism and corporate greed making sure that good businesses are rewarded, not undercut. We will rewrite the rules of the economy and sure everyone plays by them.” (p9) Thus it is implied that government legislation can transform capitalism so that it upholds and realises what could be defined as reformist and ethical objectives. But this ignores the obvious fact that the only manner in which the character of the economy can begin to be transformed is by the actions of the forces of labour to bring about the necessary changes that brings about a situation in which the balance of power is in favour of the interests of labour. However there is a contradictory aspect in this approach because it is accepted in an inconstant manner that there is the necessity of increased influence of the workers in order to ensure that progressive measures are realised: “We will require one-third of the boards to be reserved for elected worker directors and give them control over executive pay….”(p9) This measure is to be welcomed but t can only become genuinely effective if this policy becomes the basis of transition to a genuine form of workers management over enterprises and the economy in general. In other words, the manifesto proposes limited measures that are unable to effectively tackle the problems that are created by what would still be a situation of the exploitation of labour by capital. Hence it is necessary to tackle this limitation and to suggest that the situation of the election of one-third of the boards of company managements by worker representatives should become the basis for these deputies to be able to genuinely propose measures concerning how these enterprises should be organised and developed. But in order to be effective this development could only logically become the basis of a process of genuine transition to the realisation of authentic forms of workers management of the economy.

However, in a dogmatic manner the manifesto rejects the aspiration of social mobility in the name of social justice. “For Labour, the true measure of fairness is not social mobility but social justice.”(p10) This contention results in the conclusion that: “Implicit in the notion of social mobility is the idea that poverty and inequality are acceptable provided that some people climb the social ladder.”(p10) These assumptions are certainly an integral aspect of the traditional and conservative influenced conception of social mobility. But there is another form of the perspective of social mobility that is advocated by many working-class parents who aspire to create the conditions in which their children will be able to enjoy better advantages and possibilities in educational and occupational terms than they themselves experienced. This understanding is not based on the assumption of elitism but is instead about the possibility for children of working-class parents to be able to improve their situation when compared to the limitations they have experienced in relation to educational and occupational opportunities. The task for supporters of socialism is to relate to this sentiment in a constructive and progressive manner and to advocate the development of an economy in which all people will be able to realise their potential. This means an end to elitism in an effective manner and instead the character of the economy will be based on the role of skill and the necessity of menial type work will become minimised, or something that all will have to carry out as part of an obligation to society. This understanding is implicit in the view of the manifesto that indicates that social justice means that all people will have conditions for a fulfilling life, but such a perspective implies that this prospect is connected to the importance of what would be an egalitarian conception of social mobility. The point being made is that everyone in society would have the opportunity to become a university lecturer or scientist, or to have ample time for leisure and the ability to develop intellectual capabilities. Such a society would not be based on low expectations but would be an aspirational type of society in which everyone would attempt to realise their full potential. Such an aim cannot be differentiated from the prospect of the necessity for social mobility of the majority of the population.

The manifesto makes an emphatic commitment to women’s equality in terms of an important role for the equal pay commission and to realise the increased participation of women in politics and the process of government. Important measures are also mentioned in terms of opposing racial discrimination and to promote the interests of the disabled. It is also suggested that measures to being about the realisation of the rights of LGBT communities. But in this analysis, there is no mention of how people themselves can act in order to advance the cause of their own liberation. Instead the emphasis is on the importance of actions and the legislation of government, or the creation of liberation by the actions of the political elite. There is no outline of the potential that oppressed groups have in relation to the realisation of their own aspirations. Nor is there a mention of any of the problems that could undermine the realisation of equality for the oppressed, accept in reference to the indifference of Conservative governments. This means that these sections on the importance of opposing oppression is limited and incomplete. It would be necessary to revise this part of the manifesto and outline the important role that the oppressed can have in the realisation of an aspiration for genuine emancipation.

On the issue of immigration, the manifesto has a limited and cautious commitment to the right of free movement of people: “If we remain in the EU, freedom of movement will continue. If we leave, it will be subject to negotiations, but we recognise the social and economic benefits that free movement has brought both in terms of EU citizens here and UK citizens abroad – and we will seek to protect those rights.”(p19) This comment seems to imply that the principles of free movement of people can only be consistently realised if the UK is in the EU. But given that this prospect is increasingly unlikely it would seem that the question of free movement will be undermined by the imposition of immigration controls. This approach would seem to be an expression of accommodation of reactionary opinions on this issue. However, there is also the possibly contradictory approach that expresses the standpoint that the rights of refugees and asylum seekers will be upheld and respected and that these people will have the possibility to become citizens of the UK. Therefore, there is an aspect of tension between an empirical indication of the necessity of restrictions on the prospects of migration to the UK and the contrasting emphasis on the possibility of the right of migration to the UK and defending the interests of refugees. The ambiguous aspects of this policy have to be clarified in a principled manner in terms of the unconditional defence of the right of the freedom of movement.

The manifesto makes welcome changes to the benefits system and proposes to abolish universal credit and replace it with a more equitable approach to benefits. The pension system is to be reformed but there is no proposal or promise to lower the pension age to 60 years of age for men and women which would enable people to enjoy what would become a reasonable period of retirement in which the possibility to develop new interests and aspirations could be realised. Instead the emphasis is on maintaining the present rights such as the free bus pass, but the prospect of the genuine transformation of the pension system is not realised. For example, there is no promise to increase the level of the state pension. Instead the manifesto promises to end various inequities that have to be tackled by pensioners, which are welcome but the importance of the development of a situation in which the very principles of the transformation of the character of the system of pensions has not been realised and instead moderate improvements are proposed.

However, in relation to the issue of housing the aims are more ambitious. The aim is to provide cheap and affordable housing for all the people that need it and to establish an English Sovereign Land Trust with the power to buy land in order to create the conditions to build affordable homes for all. A department of housing will be created in order to develop a national housing agency that will enable local authorities to regain powers to build housing, and the aim is to build one million council houses, or 150,000 per year. Councils will also have increased powers to buy housing from private landlords. The tenants of private rented accommodation will also have greater powers such as rent controls and the issue of homelessness will be seriously tackled. These are welcome measures and indicates the serious reforming character that would be expressed by the role of a Labour government under the prime ministership of Jeremy Corbyn. This is why such a government should be critically supported, but the role of Marxists would be to indicate the limitations of what would still be reforms and why it is necessary to make definite progress towards the realisation of socialism. The manifesto does outline important measures such as an increased power to the various regional areas of the UK and the reduction of the voting age to 16. But the point is that democracy can only become genuine when it involves the participation of the people in an effective manner. In this context there is no mention of the important role that people could have in the transformation of the character of politics. Instead it is still assumed that the character of politics would be defined by the importance of the role of government legislation, but that instead of the reactionary objectives of conservative governments the process would now be influenced by the importance of the reform aspirations of Labour administrations. This understanding can only express the realisation of limited measures that will still not alter the character of the political system in a genuinely radical manner. The problem that is not tackled is that the effective realisation of measures of reform will generate the issue of what is to be carried out after this process of limited change has been completed. The Conservatives will attempt to reverse the measures of change, and on the other hand the aspiration for the introduction of more ambitious measures will have been created. In this context the Labour government will be in an impasse, which it cannot apparently resolve. But there is also the possibility that it will only introduce a few of the measures that it is promising to realise. This is why we need a militant working class movement in order to ensure that the Labour government does enact its promised measures and that such a possibility becomes the basis of the potential expression of more radical change that will then generate the potential for transition to a genuine socialist society.

In relation to Northern Ireland the major aim of the manifesto is for the return of a genuine power sharing government. In order to realise this objective, the Labour government will propose increased funding of the major public services in Northern Ireland. But the problem is that this does not resolve the divisions in Northern Ireland that have created these issues of the decline of the effectiveness of the role of the functioning government. It is necessary that in order to make progress in this context the political character of Northern Ireland should be more closely connected to the economic role of the Republic of Ireland such as a genuine promise to ensure an open border. But it is interesting that this type of promise is not included in the manifesto and so what is actually being justified is the continuation of the present unsatisfactory situation. But the political uncertainty is being created by the present inability to resolve the issue of the relations between Norther Ireland and the Republic. This outstanding question has to be clarified and answers provided if any genuine political progress in the North is to occur.

On the issue of the independence of Scotland, the manifesto is adamantly against because it considers that more genuine economic and political progress will be made in terms of Scotland remaining in the UK: “Labour believes that Scottish independence would be economically devastating and it would be the many and not the few that would pay the price. Scotland needs the transformative investment coming from a Labour government, not another referendum and not independence.” (p34) The problem with this argument is that it contrasts the understanding of the importance of economic rationality to the apparent denial of the political and democratic aspiration for the aspiration to have a referendum on Scotland being part of the UK. The point is that if the majority of the Scottish people are in favour of a referendum is it credible in democratic terms to denial the realisation of this objective? The point is that the Labour government could use the possible success of its measures to oppose the aim of independence in relation to a referendum and this would express the major reason why it would be foolish to opt in favour of separation of Scotland from the UK. Indeed, the very holding of the referendum would enable the people of Scotland (and Wales) to seriously contemplate the advantages and limitations of independence but at least they would have been given the genuine opportunity to be able to vote on this important issue. This is the crucial issue, the right to be able to vote about the possibility or not of the realisation of the independence of Scotland and Wales. In this referendum it would be the right of the Labour government to argue against the realisation of this demand because the people of Scotland had been able to achieve their aspirations in a genuinely democratic manner. But if this demand of a referendum is not granted by a Labour government then this will become the major justification of the aims of the Scottish nationalist government and it may mean that the realisation of genuine measures to improve the interests of the Scottish people become neglected. The reasoning of the Labour manifesto is that the progressive character of a Labour government will undermine the support for the demand of a referendum, but this contention is not definite and the demand for a referendum may continue to be expressed. The point is that the genuine unity of the people of Scotland and England will be advanced in the most effective manner by the holding of a referendum in Scotland about the issue of independence. Indeed, the SNP will consider that the election of a Labour government will increase the prospect of the holding of a referendum regardless of the views of this administration. Hence the only manner in which this issue can be resolved is by the role of a referendum on the issue of the membership of the UK by the people of Scotland. It would be an act of rationality for the supporters of the Labour manifesto to recognise their mistake in this context. The point is that to accept the necessity of a referendum on Scottish independence because of democratic reasons of the importance of accepting the aspirations of the majority of this nation does not mean that the aim of independence has to be supported or advocated. Instead the only obligation is to implement the result of the referendum in a democratic manner. But the manifesto rejects this principled approach and instead in a rigid manner refuses to accept the valid reasons for the holding of a referendum on the issue of Scottish independence.

The manifesto rightly rejects the approach of the Conservatives in relation to the issue of BREXIT and instead contends that a Labour government would negotiate a different and progressive arrangement with the EU, and that that this deal would be subject to a new democratic mandate of a new referendum. This new deal with the EU would establish workers rights and environmental standards. The referendum would include the option of remaining within the EU. The new settlement proposed would include the right of free movement of EU citizens within the UK, and so ensure the reciprocal right for UK citizens within the EU. If people decide to leave the EU, a Labour government will still act to work in a constructive manner with the EU. This approach is a principled standpoint that attempts to resolve the impasse created by Conservative governments about the relation of the UK to the EU. It has been suggested that Jeremy Corbyn is being indecisive about the relationship of the UK to the EU and is unable to advocate a definite leave or remain position. But the point is that he wants to try and unite leave and remain voters around an agreed and acceptable stance to both sides concerning what has been an acrimonious divide. The implicit assumption being made is that the Labour government would prefer that people support a remain option and so support the UK being in the EU. But it is also being established that the Labour administration would accept the views of the majority including support for leaving the EU. In this context the most important aspect becomes the realisation of a progressive settlement with the EU that upholds aspects like workers rights and environmental standards. The point is that the Labour manifesto recognises the necessity to establish unity within the people of the UK because disunity can only promote the interests of an increasingly reactionary Conservative party. But, those of us who are Marxists should also make a vigorous argument in favour of the UK being inside the EU because that is the most effective basis to promote the unity and solidarity of the European working class and in that manner advance the cause of the promotion of the interests of the cause of socialism within the EU. Hence Marxists should not be neutral about the relationship of the UK to the EU. Hence those Marxists who reject the membership of the UK in the EU are accommodating to nationalist arguments on this issue.

The last major section of the manifesto is entitled: ‘A New Internationalism’ This outlines the necessity of a war powers act so that Parliament should be the basis of agreeing to military action by the government. But the priority will be the promotion of peace and the necessity of international organisations to act in order to realise political settlement of international issues. Human rights should be the basis of just global system. There is also an urgent need to strive for agreement on climate change and for a just peace in the Middle East including recognition of a state of Palestine. Diplomacy is the answer to international tensions. But there is also a commitment to the maintaining and expansion of the defence industry. Hence the assumption is that the influence of the role of a progressive Labour government can ensure that foreign policy can become genuinely humanitarian and based on the interests of the British people and the international community in general. This means that it is assumed that the Labour government can act within the various international institutions like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organisation in order to promote the realisation of progressive economic and political policies. In other words what is being suggested is that genuine and radical change can be realised in terms of the transformation of international institutions by acting to change them by involvement in terms of reform and a process of cooperation with the ruling elite involved in these organisations. Obviously, involvement in these types of organisations cannot be excluded by a left-wing type of government, but the most credible and effective form of international change can only be realised in terms of the role of popular mass action by people. In this manner it would be more credible if the Labour government definitely committed itself to support for change by the actions of discontented peoples. Only in this manner can social justice be realised. It is also necessary to outline the necessity to transform the defence industry of the UK so that there is an emphasis on the importance of general disarmament apart from the obligations of self-defence. But the only manner in which this aim can be established in a principled manner is to strive for the transformation of British capitalism into a socialist society. Only in that manner can a foreign policy be established that is genuinely internationalist and is not based on the narrow interests of what is still the expression of imperialism and narrow nationalism.

In general, we can conclude that the Labour manifesto has many good aspects, and that we would advocate their realisation as part of the successful achievement of a minimum programme that is part of a genuine process to attain the successful achievement of socialism. The issue of socialism is never raised in the manifesto and so it would seem that the Labour manifesto is based on an effective rejection of the importance of this objective. This is a conclusion that Marxists can not accept and instead we would suggest that the successful realisation of the most progressive objectives of the Manifesto can only be realised in terms of the attempt to transform the various reforms outlined in a manner that advances the attainment of the objective of socialism. This process also means the mobilisation of the working class to achieve this objective. The process of progressive change cannot be exclusively limited to the role of the Labour government. Instead the very actions of a left wing Labour government should be based on the generation of the mobilisation of working people so that emancipation can be realised in a genuinely transforming manner.