

Assembly Election 2016

TIME FOR A NEW KIND OF POLITICS

**A Left
Manifesto
for A New
Generation**



www.labouralternative.org

Introduction

There is a growing disconnect between the Stormont establishment and the majority of ordinary people, particularly young people. This is reflected in falling voter turnout and the prevalent sense that “they’re all the same” up on the hill. In many senses, they are. While they bicker about issues like flags and parades, all the five main parties are wedded to the same right-wing austerity agenda.

Their policies have left one in five people in poverty, decimated our public services, created mass youth unemployment, denied women and LGBT people their basic rights and maintained sectarian division.

The growing support for socialist Bernie Sanders in the US and the movement which saw Jeremy Corbyn elected to the Labour leadership in Britain show that people internationally are looking for a radical, left alternative to poverty, inequality and division. We believe desire for the same kind of alternative is growing in Northern Ireland. From the point of view of the new generation, it’s time for a new kind of politics.

But it also time to retie the knot of history. There have always been many people in Northern Ireland who do not identify with Orange or Green politics. In the 1960s, before the “Troubles” exploded, the Northern Ireland Labour Party represented many of those. There was also support for other labour and left political parties and groups at the time. Unfortunately, no broadly-based alternative political party has existed since the 1960s.

We believe that this is the time for a genuine attempt to build a cross-community, left alternative. We are angry about austerity. We are fed up with living in a place where women and LGBT people are denied basic rights. We reject sectarian politics and sectarian politicians.

A start has to be made. Labour Alternative is a genuine attempt to build support in both communities. We have candidates from both Protestant and Catholic backgrounds. Our members are trade union, socialist, LGBT and community activists.

We support policies which unite ordinary people, not divide them. Labour Alternative respects the aspirations of all but our aspiration is a society where the majority are united in common purpose to overcome division.

Labour Alternative will stand candidates in the Assembly election with a simple programme:

Labour Alternative is against austerity and for a better life for all.

Labour Alternative is for equality and against discrimination.

Labour Alternative is for compromise and against conflict on the issues which divide our communities.

Labour Alternative is for a new kind of politics and against the sectarian agenda of the past.

1) End austerity, make the fat cats pay!

Austerity has brought nothing but misery. The DUP and Sinn Fein's "Fresh Start" will only deepen this economic disaster. One in five people here live in poverty, including over 100,000 children. We have 25% of young people out of work, yet Arlene Foster and Martin McGuinness are borrowing £700 million to wipe out 20,000 public sector jobs. At the same time, they are slashing corporation tax – giving big business an additional handout of around £300 million per year, paid for through additional cuts to health, education, housing and benefits.

Labour Alternative says:

- Stop all Tory / Stormont austerity and public sector job losses
- Kick private sector vultures out of health, education and other public services
- Rebuild and restore our NHS
- Take profiteering firms which threaten mass redundancies into public ownership
- Tax the super-rich and use the wealth for the benefit of people and planet

2) Demand a future for young people

Twenty five thousand people emigrated last year. The majority of them were young people who feel they have no future in Northern Ireland because of the repressive social conditions, sectarianism and the lack of decent jobs. Zero-hour contracts, low pay and the threat to raise student fees to £9,000 a year must be fought. We need to elect MLAs who will fight for a decent future for all young people.

Labour Alternative says:

- Voting rights for 16 and 17-year-olds – it's our future!
- Public investment to tackle youth unemployment, not handouts and tax cuts for big business
- For a genuinely integrated, free and fully funded education system
- Stop all cuts to youth centres and support services

3) Decent jobs with decent pay

Labour Alternative believes that the 'national living wage' recently introduced by the Conservative government is a sham. We are inspired by the movement for a \$15/hour minimum wage in the US which has won impressive victories through mass campaigns which have trade unionists, young people and socialists at their heart. Labour Alternative will work with others in order to build mass campaigns in order to win a real living wage.

Labour Alternative call for:

- For a real living wage – £10/hour minimum wage with no youth exemptions
- Ban zero-hour contracts
- Full employment rights for all agency staff
- Trade union rights for all workers
- Scrap all anti- trade union laws

4) Action on housing

Underinvestment in social housing has left 40,000 on the waiting list. Most young families face rip-off rents and often poor conditions in the private rental sector. Thanks to property speculation, buying their own home is beyond the grasp of most young people. Homeless is growing and we have seen tragic deaths on our streets.

Labour Alternative says:

- Keep the House Executive in public hands
- Build 8,000 Housing Executive homes a year for next 5 years
- Strict rent control on private rental accommodation

5) Stop criminalising women – Abortion rights now!

Northern Ireland's abortion legislation criminalises women and puts their health and life at risk. Over 1,000 women every year travel across the water for terminations. 69% of people say they want radical reform of our abortion laws but the politicians refuse to act. None of the main parties support a woman's right to choose.

Labour Alternative says:

- Emergency legislation to stop criminalising women NOW!
- Extend the 1967 Abortion Act to Northern Ireland
- Provide affordable childcare, decent jobs and services for women who choose to have children

6) LGBT equality

Northern Ireland is now the only part of these islands without same-sex marriage equality, despite the wishes of a large majority. Successive Health Ministers have maintained a lifetime ban on gay men giving blood, in opposition to medical opinion and at public expense. Meanwhile, the politicians have done little to nothing to challenge homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools and workplaces.

Labour Alternative says:

- Marriage equality NOW!
- Lift the gay blood ban
- Challenge homophobia and transphobia in schools and workplaces

7) Make the Stormont dinosaurs extinct

Labour Alternative believes it is necessary to challenge the backward politicians at Stormont, not just in relation to LGBT and abortion rights. We will put forward a radical programme of change to bring Northern Ireland into the 21st century.

Labour Alternative says:

- Challenge rape culture and all forms of sexism
- Organise against racist attacks. Unite for jobs, homes and services for all
- End criminalisation of drug users – invest in addiction and support services instead

8) Moving beyond Green and Orange

Labour Alternative is neither a unionist nor a nationalist party but a party that promotes democratic, socialist ideas. We stand for the unity of Protestants and Catholics. We have much more in common than divides us. We stand for solidarity with working people in England, Scotland and Wales who face the same daily struggles. And we are in favour of building links with working people in the South of Ireland who are also engaged in a battle against cuts and austerity. It is through a shared experience of struggle and day to day solidarity that we will break down barriers and reach agreement on a shared future.

Labour Alternative says:

- Unite Protestant and Catholic communities to fight for a better life for all
- For compromise, mutual respect and local agreements on contentious issues
- Resist the Green and Orange politicians' attempts to divide us along sectarian lines
- Trade unions unite us in the workplaces – they should take action to unite us politically
- Unite with those in the Republic of Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England engaged in the same fight for a better life

9) International solidarity

The capitalist system means we live in a profoundly unequal world - a world in which war and militarism is a daily reality. Labour Alternative is committed to standing in the proud tradition of international solidarity between workers and the poor.

Labour Alternative says:

- Support for those fleeing conflict and oppression, not more bombs and bullets
- Scrap Trident – invest in socially useful jobs and services instead!
- For a democratic Europe run by and for the 99%, not the billionaires

10) Put our planet before profit

Labour Alternative activists have been active in campaigning against fracking and other environmental destructive practices. We believe in a radically different type of politics that puts our environment and people's needs before the profits of big business.

Labour Alternative says:

- Ban fracking immediately to safeguard our water supply and ecosystem
- Take the energy sector and our natural resources into public ownership
- Major investment for rapid transition to affordable, renewable energy
- Take meaningful action against corporate polluters

11) Socialist change, not capitalist inequality

The Panama Papers have lifted the lid on super-rich tax evasion. \$20 trillion is held by the 1% in off-shore accounts around the world. The super-rich in the UK avoid around £120 billion in taxes every year. Tax avoidance is not a victimless crime, it is endemic in capitalism and one of the reasons why the majority of working class people struggle to make ends meet.

The growing support for Bernie Sanders and socialism in the US is an indication that around the world ordinary people are looking for a better society beyond what capitalism has failed to deliver.

Labour Alternative stands for a socialist policies, solidarity and democratic, public ownership of society's wealth to deliver a future free from poverty, inequality, war and division.

Our Candidates

Courtney Robinson – Belfast East

Voters in East Belfast will have the opportunity to vote for at least one Robinson in May, although the politics on offer will be very different from those of the DUP. Courtney Robinson is an 18 year-old call centre worker, born and bred in the East and has been a socialist activist since she was 14.

Courtney's Record:

- In 2014, Courtney took part in the Abortion Pill Train, which saw the medicines openly transported from Belfast to Dublin and taken publicly in defiance of the law.
 - Led the protest outside the last DUP conference, calling on them to stop blocking same-sex marriage.
 - In the wake of a racist arson attack on a business in East Belfast in April last year, Courtney was central to a community protest which mobilised hundreds onto the streets.
 - A call centre worker and trade unionist, she helped organise the 2012 March for a Future which crossed the Shankill-Falls peaceline in opposition to education cuts and youth unemployment.
 - Courtney has previously served as Students' Union President at Belfast Met, the largest further education college in Northern Ireland.
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Sean Burns – Belfast South

Seán Burns is a 19 year-old trade unionist and socialist activist from South Belfast.

Seán's Record:

- As part of a campaign against cuts to the Education Maintenance Allowance, Seán participated in a protest which disrupted Assembly proceedings and occupied the Department of Employment & Learning headquarters.
 - A member of Unite the Union's Irish Youth Committee, the largest trade union in Britain and Ireland.
 - Helped organise the major Rally for a Future in Ballymena in response to threatened manufacturing job losses.
 - Organised the March for a Future across the Shankill-Falls peaceline in opposition to education cuts and unemployment.
 - A committed campaigner for LGBT rights, Seán spoke alongside prominent activists like Mike Jackson of Lesbians & Gays Support the Miners (featured in the movie Pride) at last summer's Fight4Equality festival in Belfast.
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Conor Sheridan – East Antrim

Conor Sheridan is a 24 year-old student and young worker from Larne.

Conor's record:

- Actively involved in the campaign against drilling in Woodburn forest near Carrickfergus, which is feared could pollute the nearby reservoir which serves much of East Antrim and beyond.
- A proud member of Unite the Union.
- He plans to run the Belfast marathon in May to raise funds for the SOS bus and homeless support services.