

How To Talk Politics With Voters

The group activity on the next page aims to help progressive political organisations and parties to connect better with voters by mobilising and supporting their members in using their existing relationships with the mass of the population who are not members.

Talking politics with people you know and have existing relationships with, organic connections, is more substantive than firing off opinions to strangers on social media.

Organic connections means members connecting politically with people they already know and have everyday relationships with, developing adult politics, with it becoming the norm for citizens to discuss politics together, independently of conservative mass media.

This will overcome the usual alienated campaigning relationship of 'We Labour, you voter' and replace it with scenarios where members and the many voters they already know discuss politics as fellow-voters, equals, all members of that majority who need progressive governments.

The paper 'How To Talk Politics With Each Other' explains how to tackle the traditional attitudes of 'Don't talk politics (or religion) in the pub'. This attitude is disastrous. The present situations in the UK, the USA and many other countries show that we must talk to each other, politically, as fellow-citizens and voters.

The organisation of the group activity is drawn from the writer's lengthy experience as a Trade Union Tutor (now retired), where such methods were the norm, were effective, and enjoyed by union reps and members who took part in them.

Activity: How To Talk Politics With Voters

- Aims:**
- To exchange experience of talking about politics
 - To develop confidence and skills in talking with voters (see *, over page)
 - To develop best practice

Group Task

The facilitator will organise small groups. (See Notes for facilitators, overleaf)

In your group get **someone to start off and informally chair** your discussion - i.e. keeping it to one speaker at a time (and indicating who that is); allowing nobody to speak twice until everybody has had a chance. Choose **somebody else to take notes** of key points, on this sheet, on card provided by the facilitator, or on a smartphone.

1. Ask members in turn about discussions they have had or have witnessed about politics, voting and the party. (see **, over page)

Find out:

- Who was the discussion with? (no need for names)
- Where? (tea break, party, across the garden wall etc?).
- What was the political issue?
- How did it start?

- What did they say? What did you say?
- How did it develop?
- Did it seem the other person's views were influenced by the mass media?
- How did it end?

2. End the group work by noting down ideas on best practice in talking with voters, on the issues discussed or just in general.

3. Full-branch Report Back from each group and general discussion

In **setting up the report back** explain that we will aim to take reports on one topic from each group in turn. We may not get to every group but all will have had the benefit of their own group work and will get the benefit of the whole report back.

A Resource document or takeaway for this activity titled *How To Talk Politics With Each Other* is provided here after the activity and is permanently available at www.thesystemexplained.com

Notes for facilitators

* Not all members will be in a position to, or willing, to talk with voters on their own. The activity is to support those who can, and all members will be able to contribute to that. Members should be reassured that in talking with voters, they are doing so as fellow-voters, not as official spokespeople for the party, and need not feel obliged to defend every party policy. The aim is simply to talk with fellow-voters openly as a fellow-voter but also as a Labour member; and for the party in this way to have grass-roots dialogue with voters that can, also in the long run, inform policy.

** with workmates, neighbours, relatives, friends; with fellow-members in their union; with people met while campaigning or knocking on doors; discussions they've seen or taken part in on social media, things they've read in 'the papers' or seen on TV etc.

Setting Up Groups

Think about how to set up the groups quickly and without confusion. The following methods might seem complicated but they aren't really and can be worth doing to achieve a good discussion. Here are some pointers -

1. Have cards cut, for numbering groups and for group note takers.
2. Best scenario is to **have tables laid** out. Based on expected numbers attending, enough tables for groups of, ideally, four people. (Five or six might do but then people tend to informally sub-divide into threes).

Ideally groups could be set up with a mix of experience of activism, age, life roles, gender, ethnicity etc. But initially, and for one session at a Branch meeting, just mixing people up is all that will be achievable.

3. For first or early sessions with a particular gathering, maybe don't even mix them up, just set up the groups with people adjacent to each other, until the main process becomes familiar.

4. For a random mix: Place a number on each table. As members come in, explain that we are having discussion groups and are mixing people up so they can meet and discuss with those they don't know. At the door, allocate them to tables like this: first person to table 1, next to table 2, and so on.

5. If there are tables and you didn't give people a table number at the door **and people are already at them**, number the tables. Then explain, apologise and seek agreement for moving them and their coats and bags. It is a bind but well worth it. Then go to each table as you found it, go round the members there and allocate them to table 1, then 2, then 3.

6. **If there are no tables** and members are just on chairs, have group number cards ready. Aim for groups of four to six and, depending on numbers present, that will give the number of groups. Then if it's say, 7 groups: go round giving a card, 1 or 2, 3,4,5, 6, or 7, to every 7th person. For the rest, start with the person next to card 1, allocate them to group 1, the next person to 2, the next to group 3, and so on. Then get people to assemble in their groups. The person with the number is just an assembly point, not necessarily group chair.

How To Talk Politics With Each Other

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People think politics is about politicians and what politicians do. But it's not, it's about us running society together. Or it needs to be. So we need to talk to each other more about politics as fellow-citizens. That we don't do it enough was shown by, in Britain, the referendum on Europe and the Brexit saga that followed, and, in 2019, voters (as a whole) electing a Conservative government hostile to most people's interests, in large part because of Brexit. In America, by Trump's win.

In Britain, the Labour Party (I am a member) mainly talk to voters by going round the streets knocking on doors just before elections. But that's like approaching strangers and bluntly asking about their sex lives! And election time is too little, too late, when the media, mostly owned by businesspeople, and conservative, have been at people every day, over and over, for years.

Talking about politics is best, most naturally done by talking to people you know, people you already have a relationship with, every day or whenever it comes up. Talking to each other is essential if the progressive majority are going to overcome the media demonisation of progressive parties, policies and leaders, by by-passing them with our own independently-run communications.

(This paper leaves aside social media for now. Talking in real life, with people you have real, definite, organisational relationships with, is far more useful than social media where we just fling snappy opinions at each other, and only in our role as voters who only act together, atomised, at occasional elections. The thrust of all these writings is that we need to associate in definite social organisations in which we can act with real social and political power. Social media is important though. But is not addressed here, yet.)

How To Talk Politics And By-Pass The Media

You can talk politics with people all the time. You don't have to push it. You probably shouldn't. No need for 'Let's talk politics'. People say things about issues that are clearly political while appearing to think they aren't. That opens the possibility for political debate. You just have to develop the skill of noticing how people say things that are dependent on politics and be prepared to raise that openly, broadening it into a proper political discussion. It comes up naturally in conversation, at work with fellow-workers; with friends, relatives, neighbours; in pubs and bars. Most people are keen to voice their political opinions.

But you'll need to deal with –

'Don't talk politics in the pub or club, or at family events'.

Get over that with 'Look, we're fellow-citizens. Look at the EU referendum in Britain. Look at the election of Trump in the USA. We *have* to be able to talk to each other about how society works.'

and

'How we vote affects each other. It isn't only an individual act. How we vote – or don't vote – is not only about each person's personal view on politics. It's a *collective* decision. We're fellow-citizens, fellow-workers (mostly), maybe actual workmates, friends, neighbours, relatives. Politics affects us together. We have to talk about it together, you as well as me. It's part of being adult.'

Long-term, if you are too keen, you might need to deal with 'There s/he goes again, on about politics'. Deal with that, again, with the *need* for us to do it, as mature fellow-citizens.

For any who say 'I'm not interested in politics' say 'Well politics is interested in you'.

Then there's an attitude that's become common that denies political debate and agreement, even denies basing political views on facts, where people say 'Well you think that, I think this, everybody has their own opinion.' This is certainly true in an absolute sense. But the whole point of human civilisation and democratic politics is to come to agreed decisions on the main elements of how the society we share will be run. We do all have our own opinions but we have to combine them

into coherent public policy on a wide range of issues. We can't do it with every last small policy area and every last detail, a fair amount has to be left to legislators, governments, public service managers, judges and more. But in principal we do.

Everybody having their own opinion might be OK for survivalists living in the wood, but most of human society is run by groups of humans organising together. And such organisations can't function with everybody just pleasing themselves. At work, your bosses don't say 'Yeah, all of you just please yourselves what you do, whatever.' They are more or less dictators of facts and actions, from everything to do with the actual task to even how you dress. Then there's the law. The whole point of it, in all its detail, is to determine who is 'right' in how we behave towards each other. Do the military just let all their troops have their own view? You won't do very well as a football team unless you agree on what is happening – agree the facts – and what to do together.

There are many things we do that *are* pretty much our own business. Each to their own, different strokes for different folks. But not work, politics and law - they are collaborative. Most things in public life are done by agreement on facts and actions, collectively, by some form of human common purpose. It may sometimes be imposed by autocrats, but preferably by various degrees of democracy.

With politics, denying political discussion with 'everybody has their own opinion' doesn't elevate each of those opinions, it reduces them. Because if they are all left as being different all the opinion-holders will lose their right to have a say. Because for opinions and votes to have effect, for effective democratic decisions, some significant number of people have to discuss and agree, to pool their views into coherent proposals, policies, that the remaining people can vote on. So the effect of 'everybody has their opinion', if universal, would make it impossible even to draw up anything for us to vote on. Those who say 'Everybody has their own opinion' makes them mere followers of those who realise each of us can't rule the world but, to have any real say, have to chew on it and work on agreeing things with others.

Feelings Not Facts?

Another attitude to challenge is people going by feelings rather than facts and debate. You can do that with personal tastes but you can't have an opinion on most political policy issues without a bit of consideration of facts and options. In politics, going too much by feelings is to decline to exercise your right to have your say. It usually means handing that right over to some politician who only appeals to your feelings, assuring you they'll look after you, invoking feelings of security, belonging, hope or change, with extravagant rhetoric.

What should we say to fellow-voters who say they just go by feelings? Maybe this – 'Well we do function with feelings and it can't be all about facts and reasoning. But don't you think the two should go together? Don't use feelings as an excuse for not weighing things up properly. It just doesn't make sense, if you really want to get what you want. But what are your feelings? Let's talk about them then.'

Values

Another approach might be to ask about their social values. Do they agree we should aim for *fairness* in society? (That's not the same thing as equality.) How much do they think we depend upon each other, as citizens? How much do they think we *should* depend on each other? How caring should we be to others? How much help do they think we should be able to expect from others? What do they think of the term 'solidarity'?

What do they think of the attitude 'It's everybody for themselves'? And 'People should be able to keep what they've got'. (A key response to this big conservative argument is to say 'Well let's look at how they get it. Most wealth is made from other people's work.)

So, if we can now look at how to talk politics with each other, it would be best to agree some basics about how to conduct ourselves -

- Instead of just exchanging a few opinions 'dragged from thin air' when getting onto political territory, then rapidly reverting to less contentious ground such as holidays, purchases and sport, agree to discuss politics properly for (say) ten or twenty minutes.
- 'OK, it often gets heated. Let's agree to talk but keep calm. We won't agree today on whatever we discuss - (you rarely do!) but we will each take away what the other said and think about it'. People - me and you included - do change their mind that way.
- Maybe agree early on that we all want a fair, decent society, and what we are discussing is how to arrange it.
- That whatever varying political opinions we have, we are talking as decent people, possibly as humanitarians or liberals (people in favour of treating others properly). That we are (mostly) each a worker with common interests based on that as well as being fellow-citizens.

Try for an evenly balanced debate. Keep discussions mutual, i.e. let each other speak. Look for points that you agree on, don't let disagreements obstruct that. Finish with 'Well, have we agreed on anything?' And can we each go away agreeing to think a bit about what we've each said?

Who We Vote For

And we need to be open with each other about who we vote for. In the UK, voting originally needed to be by secret ballot because landlords would evict you or employers sack you if you didn't vote for their candidate. And it still does need to be a secret ballot, formally, as far as the state and employers not knowing how you vote. But between ourselves, equal citizens who aren't going to intimidate each other, we should be open with each other about how we vote, and why.

In summary, we need to talk to each other, and organise together, as citizens and as workers, to work towards mass, mature, involved citizenship.

It's About Parties, Not Just Leaders

Most media, and many ordinary people, treat politics as if it's all about the party leaders. Almost all media coverage is about how they do or don't hold sway over their party, their prospects for winning elections, their qualities and shortcomings as possible or actual Prime Ministers. This is ridiculous. From the media, it is treating party leaders as dictators. From party members who place all their hopes in whoever is leader, it's immature 'We need a Messiah' politics.

And media and people generally place all the responsibility on the leader to get voters to vote for their party. But it's not only the leader's job, it's every Labour member's job. Whoever is leader doesn't know member's relatives, friends, neighbours, workmates. They do, and they need to talk politics with them.

Yes, leaders are important. But the key qualities of a leader shouldn't be, as the media and many people see it, as a one-person policy-maker and decision-maker. On policy-making, parties have many members and activists, and policies are decided by thorough processes. The major decisions should be made by collective party leadership, not one person. Messiah politics demeans those many others who are active as citizens. In a proper democracy, we all matter.

The leader's key qualities are being able to bring together and hold together coalitions of views, in cabinets, in Parliaments and in the party membership as a whole.

Expecting as much from leaders as the media and most people do is doomed to failure anyway. It's foolish to expect them to be all-wise. They can't be. So in talking to people about politics, argue against people going on and on about the qualities and failings of potential prime ministers or presidents. Or just saying they 'like' one more than another. There's more to any party than the attributes of just one person. Argue instead for supporting parties rather than leaders.

Taking Responsibility

One reason people pay so much attention to who is leader is because they give up trying to make sense of politics themselves, with all the issues. So they take the easier option of 'Leave it to somebody else', some leader or other.

This is because we don't have a clear, commonly-held understanding of *the system - the business system*. Nor of how business people dominate it and how they are responsible for most of our problems. It's not really difficult to understand and talk about politics when you locate discussion in terms of this central political issue – that business people, the business class, have the most power in society; that most people are workers, members of the worker class; that business people get power through being organised; that in response the rest need to organise too, mainly as workers, and are entitled to. *Look At The System, a free download from the website www.lookatthesystem.com* is a resource for this.

As said, we do need leaders. But the over-emphasis on them is a condemnation of our democracy. We should work towards a thorough, involved democracy, with widespread involvement of mature, rational citizens, acting together all through society. I've seen it done in the trade union movement.

Political meetings needn't be boring if discussions are organised with small groups that allow everyone to speak, and small group sessions finished off with 'report back' sessions. (see later.)

Getting Fellow-citizens To Vote Effectively

People give reasons for how they vote, or why they don't, that don't make sense. Here are the main ones, and some responses:

- *'I'm not voting for any of them. They're all as bad as each other'.*

Tell them that's never so. They all disappoint in some way, that's always going to be true. But they are never all the same. There's simply too many issues and too many policies for the parties to be the same on all of them. Saying that is just lazy.

- *'I'm not voting for a party because of (a single issue)'.*

You don't usually get a vote on one issue. There are many issues and each party has differing policies on each of them. Where people feel so strongly about one party on one issue that they don't want to vote for the party, *they should weigh up what the other parties are saying* on that issue too. Prime example – after Tony Blair's criminal, mass murdering war on Iraq, many Labour voters stopped voting Labour. But that only, eventually, helped to allow the Tories into government. They, and Parliament as a whole, had backed Blair on his war. And they were far worse than Blair on domestic issues.

You normally have to vote for packages of policies. You shouldn't vote according to only one issue. *You need to decide on the least bad package*. Whatever you think of the parties, whatever their leaders or candidates have done, or not done, *once you get to the final list of candidates, to casting your vote, to the ballot paper, one of them must be the least bad*, at that point; and you are surely better off with them in government than a worse one. So, in Britain, it means, even when Labour governments don't do as much as you'd like them too, Labour is always the best option for most people. They should never let the Conservatives in. The same applies in the US - the Democrats may not do enough but are the obvious better option for the majority than the Republicans.

- Similarly, in protest against what Labour or the Democrats or social democrat parties have done or not done, some will say *they are voting for a minor party*.

Most often it's in a constituency where the minor party has no chance of winning. Protest voters see it as teaching Labour a lesson but they damage themselves rather than Labour. The protest vote just splits the progressive vote and allows the Conservatives – the worst option, usually - to win the

seat and get into government with, usually, less than 40% of the vote while the combined progressive vote is regularly in the 50% to 60% range.

Where someone has a long-term commitment to the small party, and are looking to build it in the long term, maybe it makes sense. But at any particular election, all they are doing is allowing somebody worse in. That party should make tactical decisions about how supporters should vote in each election, to get the best or least-bad party or candidate in. They are generally in too much of a positive mindset about themselves to do that. So then it's up to *voters themselves* to take a realistic look at what is possible in any current election and vote for the party that is nearest to their needs most able to win the seat.

If the voter wants to build the minor party in the long-term, there are better ways to do it than throwing away their vote. They and others need to build that party in between elections, not just with a futile protest vote.

- Many people say their vote makes no difference.

Well, yes, for everyone, it's rare for votes to be so tight that their vote appears to be a deciding vote. But, they do add up, don't they?

- Some say '*they're all as bad as each other*' and don't vote at all.

In the UK, usually about 30% of those entitled to vote don't, and it's one of the reasons we regularly have parties governing us who have the support of less than 40% of citizens. For all the fuss about elections for President in the USA, only about 50% vote.

But yes, a lot of people say 'I don't bother with any of them *they're all the same*'. But that's a cop-out from doing any thinking. I've taken part in loads of union elections at all levels and only rarely is it really hard to decide between two candidates. It's easy to find enough of a difference to be able to decide on one rather than the other.

It's easier still with the political parties. There's too many issues, too many policies, too much to each package, for that to be true. They don't really match up very closely over the whole range, if you just actually think about the issues and the policies for a minute. More on the nature of the main parties shortly, but argue to them that they should vote, to at least make sure the least bad and not the worst gets in.

Intentions – Governing Is Not Just Managerial

In Britain the Labour Party loses votes, and elections, because the conservative 'newspapers' convince people that they are not *competent to manage the economy*. It's a myth – see *Labour Is Fit To Govern* at www.lookatthesystem.com.

But the idea that choice of parties is just about competence leads many to vote for '*change*'. They vote for a party simply because they are unhappy with the existing government. They'll say '*Let's give the other lot a try*'. Many people voted for Trump for this reason.

They do this because the present situation is unsatisfactory (it always will be, to some extent); they don't have a clear view of the system; so they take the easy option that the vote gives to just try something different. It's not a thought-out or useful approach.

But it needs arguing with such people that there's more to it than just competence anyway. The competence accusation against Labour rests on the notion that all parties intend to govern well for all and that a key task is managing the economy, portrayed as a neutral skill. So the choice between parties is just about each one's managerial ability.

But first ask people to look at *what are a party's intentions anyway?* What do they try to do? What are they for, who are they for?

Conservatives claim to be doing what's best for everybody. Amazingly, they get away with it. It's quite an achievement because they simply don't intend to manage the country for all. They aim to

manage it for their own people, the people they represent – business people - the business *class* - and rich people. And for just enough of the rest – managers, sections of skilled workers – to get enough votes to win elections.

But them getting away with it is also our own fault, for not challenging those many of us who get their political news and opinions from them – from the other side's 'newspapers'. They set the agenda for broadcast comment too, for 'the media' generally. And it's also our fault for not organising and educating each other enough to show them up.

Labour and other Social Democratic parties do aim to do their best for the majority. But they are seriously obstructed by the media. While we don't talk to each other much about politics, *they* do, they talk to us relentlessly. The business-owned media deeply influence voters. They divert enough of them into blaming outsiders for problems to take votes away from progressive parties who, correctly, blame them, the business class. And they generally undermine Labour's and progressive party's credibility with voters.

To pull people out of the conservative media's influence, we first need to make it widely known that business people dominate politics, not only through the media but more because, as businesses, they are most of the economy. Only when that is done can we show people that most of 'the media' is business people influencing voters in the interests of business people.

And it needs to be made widely known that their demonization of outsiders of various kinds is done consciously, to divert some people from blaming them, the business class and their free-market business system, for problems. We - ordinary people - need to by-pass them, need to talk to each other directly, as fellow-citizens and as fellow-workers. And the Labour Party need to talk to voters independently of this anti-Labour media.

We obstruct Labour though. Not enough of us are prepared to vote for them on manifesto's to properly regulate business people and conservatives and manage society for the majority, non-business people. Labour feel they don't have the support to do that, and so they don't. It's up to us to talk to each other more and persuade each other to vote for them do it.

In summary - it's up to us to talk to each other more about politics and persuade each other to vote for parties genuinely on our side.

The Parties - They're All The Same. And They're Not

The 'they're all the same' view leads to people seeing elected representatives as 'them', a homogenous group. It's happened with the Brexit issue in the UK, where people rail against 'Them in Parliament' or 'Politicians' for not sorting it out. This is lazy thinking. It's pretty obvious that elected politicians have varying objectives, so there's no reason to talk of them as a homogenous body that you can expect to 'just get on with it'. In his book '*Look At The System*' this writer promotes a forensic view of politics, based on the definite realities of relationships at work and in business. But just watching the Brexit debates in Parliament, it's plain as the nose on your face that the Conservatives are mostly an arrogant, entitled bunch, representing wealthy business people, with maybe only between fifty and a hundred with any human decency. And that Labour MP's are mostly decent, well-intentioned people, even if with varying approaches to how to regulate the few business people for the benefit of the many. Lisa Nandy is not Andrea Leadsom. John McDonnell is not Michael Gove.

When people say 'They're all the same' what they really mean is 'They're all a disappointment'. But to think that, you must believe what each party claims, that they are trying to do right by *everybody*. That's not true.

The Conservatives can't ever be a *disappointment* to any worker. Why expect anything of them but Business-class bias against we people-as-workers? Conservatives and Business class people are wealthy enough not to need public services. (Except for the police and the military, to defend their property and system, and to control other countries for business purposes.) Apart from those, they've a visceral hatred of other public services, of doing anything with or for us, and don't want to

be taxed to pay for publicly-provided things they, being rich, don't need. They pretend to support public services because most of us *do* want them and they've realised they won't get into government without concealing their true attitudes. Then, just as important, maybe more so, is their hostility and hatred of us being able to organise, in unions.

The Labour Party was set up as the party of the majority, us-as-workers. But careerists like Blair noticed that during 18 years of Conservative government, 1979 to 1997, a lot of us were taken in by business class propaganda and allowed or even assisted the Conservatives to win elections on pro-business, anti-working class, anti-union and anti-public services programmes. So in order to win elections the Blairites decided to become, as New Labour, another pro-business party (they called it being in favour of free markets) and hoped to still be able to do a bit to improve things. The party allowed this, allowed Blair and Brown to cower to the business class, to win the votes of the better-off, Tory-minded workers. This was from a lack of conviction that is only a reflection of the politics of the whole class. As a party, bad as New Labour were, they were simply not as bad as the Conservatives. Unlike them, they weren't enthusiastically, viciously against public services and against ordinary working people.

Whenever I talk to people about politics, the government and the political parties, I declare early on that I am working class. (Though I'm moving to saying 'worker class', because working class has been reduced to meaning just less qualified workers on lower incomes). So why, despite Labour in some respects not achieving as much as workers might want, why would I or them vote instead for *anti-worker* parties? The problem we had with New Labour isn't solved by turning to worse parties who are *enthusiastically* anti-worker. The thing to do with Labour is to vote them in as the best option - the least bad if you want - the nearest to being a party for workers, and to support and influence them to do more. And to defend ourselves and improve our conditions with more than just progressive governments but with organisation at work.

The Lib Dems are a party of small business people, managers and professionals. They also are pro-business and have no intention of doing anything for us as workers. They just claim the whole show can be run more efficiently. That's because of their class – being middle-management and small business (often rural, if you look at their seats).

All the main parties seem the same because they all defer to the Business Class. The business class own most of the economy. You could say, and they do, that through their enterprising business activity, they *are* 'the economy.' They are very determined people, full of confidence and with a strong sense of their own self-importance. They want a lot of things their way. They can and do make sure that governments, of whatever party supposedly 'in power', give them most of what they demand.

Conceding everything to the business class isn't a problem for the *Conservatives*. They *are* the business class, organised into a political party to represent them *as* a class.

For *Labour* it is a problem. They have to challenge the business class or work with them. How Labour governments handle them, try to get them to behave themselves, to behave more sociably, is the biggest issue they face.

So the parties are not, as some people say, 'all the same' - the Conservatives are the Business Class: Labour tries to do better for the masses but defers to the business class's power, and we are all unwilling to challenge the business-class 'news' paper's influence on how people think and vote. The Lib Dems are small business and management class.

There is another mis-conception about political parties that we need to clear up with voters. After the Labour Party lost the December 2019 election to the Conservatives the media, commentators and even Labour leaders themselves accused Labour of letting voters down and even demanding Labour apologise to voters.

This comes from people treating the party, and other parties, as if they are public services. But unless in government, political parties aren't public services that other voters, having paid taxes, can

make demands on. And not businesses that people, having given money to, can make demands on about quality of goods and services.

Labour Party members like me are voters ourselves. The party is a voluntary association of those voters who care enough about the conditions in their own lives and those of other voters to organise and put forward policies and candidates to improve them. Half a million Labour members and active trade unionists and others affiliated to the party are voters too, who join the party, pay money in, go to meetings, committees and conferences, discuss and vote on the policies we think best for the many, and who from amongst us we should put forward as leaders, and as candidates for elections.

Most of our fellow-voters don't take the trouble to do this. They leave us to do all the graft but some expect us to meet every individual whim and concern they have, including Jeremy Corbyn's beard. Now although we do need, for our own good and, we think, theirs, to convince enough of them that the policies, candidates and leaders we choose are the best on offer, it is not a *duty* we owe them. It's more the case that they, as fellow-citizens, owe us a duty, to get involved, maybe join the party and do what we do, compromise with each other on many issues to put together the best political offer we can, and the best available, and offer it to the electorate. Which we did, apart from being understandably caught out by the divisive Brexit issue.

There are things we got wrong in this election, and this writer is making his points in a paper called 'Labour and the UK Election' on his website www.lookatthesystem.com. But they are for members to say to each other. To non-members, we owe no duty. But we do absolutely need to communicate with them, and them with us, day in, day out, on political issues. This writer is urging the party to format branch meetings around exchanging experience and developing best practise on this, and is providing an activity for branches to use to do this.

This paper has been about the usual main political act - the occasional, solitary, atomised vote. There's referendums too, of course. But they suffer from similar problems to voting for representatives in Parliament, Congress and similar assemblies - there's not enough properly organised discussion between we citizens. People's Assemblies are a way forward. They are temporary gatherings of citizens selected randomly, maybe with proportions by age, gender, ethnicity and so on - who meet over a cycle of weekend conferences and suchlike, with presentations by people with expert knowledge, and come up with recommendations for the rest of us on the policy issue. This writer's best knowledge of it is a book that calls it '*Sortition*', the book being *Against Elections: The Case for Democracy* by [David Van Reybrouck](#).

A final note intended to de-mystify politics - people talk about politics and the political system as if everything about society *starts* from there. As if we, whether politicians or all of us, started from a blank sheet and made society what it is. As if politics decides everything that goes on. That's not how it is. Lots of things go on in society, far more than government can reach. And most are governed by rules people have developed over centuries, often without political action, just 'what is done' or has come to be done. Some of it will have been set down in law and in political statute. But much won't have been. One important example, the central subject of this whole set of writings, is how mass production gives employers unfair power over individual workers, without us ever having decided in politics that this is how it should be.

The way to see politics is as a way of *potentially* altering what already goes on in society, business and work. To see the system and the basic activities and duties and rights and penalties as existing, and politics is the main, officially-offered way of changing the broadest-ranging of them.

But the most important thing is for the majority to recognise how society is based on class - the business class and the worker class - and to organise *as* the worker class.

There are more papers like this, covering all the basic organisational political issues, at www.thesystemexplained.com