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LET US WINTHROUGH TOGETHER

A DECLARATION OF LABOUR POLICY FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF THE NATION

1950

TWOPENCE

LABOUR PARTY GENERAL ELECTION MANIFESTO 1950

Let us win through together: a declaration of Labour policy for the consideration of the nation

Date of Election Thursday 23 February

Party Leader Clement Attlee Candidates 617

MPs 315 Votes 13,266,592 % of Vote 46.1%

When the Labour Party published Let Us Face the Future in 1945 those five words were more than the title of the Election Manifesto; they were five words which crystal-lised the minds of our people at that time. By hard work, good sense and self-discipline the people have laid the foundations of a future based on free social democracy. They have helped Parliament and Government to carry into effect all the main proposals in that Manifesto.

Now in 1950 the country is facing another General Election. We ask our fellow citizens to assert in their free exercise of the franchise that by and large the first majority Labour Government has served the country well. The task now is to carry the nation through to complete recovery. And that will mean continued, mighty efforts from us all. The choice for the electors is between the Labour Party—the party of positive action, of constructive progress, the true party of the nation—and the Conservative Party—the party of outdated ideas, of unemployment, of privilege.

The new moral order

Socialism is not bread alone. Economic security and freedom from the enslaving material bonds of capitalism are not the final goals. They are means to the greater end—the evolution of a people more kindly, intelligent, free, co-operative, enterprising and rich in culture. They are means to the greater end of the full and free development of every individual person. We in the Labour Party—men and women from all occupations and from every sphere of life—have set out to create a community that relies for its driving power on the release of all the finer constructive impulses of man. We believe that all citizens have obligations to fulfil as well as rights to enjoy.

In contrast, the fainthearted feel that only fear of poverty will drive men to work for the nation. 'Empty bellies', one Tory has said, 'are the one thing that will make Britons work.' Labour for its part declares that full employment is the corner-stone of the new society.

The Labour Government has ensured full employment and fair shares of the necessities of life. What a contrast with pre-war days! In those days millions of unwanted men eked out their lives in need of the very things they themselves could have made in the factories that were standing idle.

Even when at work each man often feared that the next pay-day would be the last. The wife feared that the housekeeping money would suddenly vanish. Often it did. Her husband was handed his cards, he drew the dole, then she had to make do with a fraction of her previous money—and despite all her sacrifices the children suffered. The queue at the Labour Exchange was repeated in the queue of small traders at the bankruptcy court. Clerks and professional people saw their hopes destroyed and their savings swept away by the slump.

Big Business did not believe in Britain—it believed only in profit. So money went into cinemas, not coal; into luxury flats, not looms for Lancashire; into land speculation, not into agriculture.

Whatever our Party, all of us old enough to remember are in our hearts ashamed of those years. They were unhappy years for our country and our people. They must never come again.

First five years

Full employment is the main, but not the only achievement. Six years of war ate away our wealth—crippled our trade, blitzed our homes and factories, sank our ships, and axed our overseas investments. The world has been desperately short of food since the war. But Britain has accomplished a recovery unsurpassed by any other country. No doubt there have been mistakes. But judge on what basis you will—by the standard of life of the general body of citizens, by employment, by the infrequency of serious industrial disputes, by the stability of the nation, by social security—by any fair comparison, the British people have done an infinitely better job than was done after the first World War.

By explaining to the people what needed to be done, by giving the facts, by appealing to the patriotism of the people, by vigorous, sensible leadership, the Labour Government has led Britain to the first victories of peace. Now let us win through together.

Work for all

The supreme aim that we set before the nation is the maintenance of full employment. Here is Labour's policy.

The nation's greatest need is to export more, especially to North America, so that we can pay for enough food to eat, and enough raw materials to keep our factories running. Labour will not dodge this problem as Tory Governments did before the war. If mass unemployment came again, people would once more be too poor to buy much food from abroad, and idle factories would not need imported raw materials. If social services were cut, wages slashed and full employment lost we might once again succeed in masking our overseas trade problem—but only at the cost of human misery, queues at the Labour Exchange and a nation divided by industrial bitterness. That was, and still is, the Tory way. It is not ours.

Labour's way—the way of full employment—is to produce more and to export more, to increase efficiency and to lower costs.

Purchasing power and production must march together. Just as we have aimed at keeping purchasing power within limits in the last few years when there have been too few goods and too much money, so we will be prepared to expand purchasing power if the danger is too little money and too many goods.

Labour will encourage the introduction of equal pay for equal work by women when the nation's economic circumstances allow it.

Finance must be the servant and not the master of employment policy. Public ownership of the Bank of England has enabled the Government to control monetary policy. Subject to the will of Parliament, we shall take whatever measures may be required to control financial forces, so as to maintain full employment and promote the welfare of the nation.

Publicly owned industry will be ready to expand its investment when employment policy demands it. The public sector will, by speeding up necessary capital development, help to maintain employment.

Special measures for areas of special need. The rebuilding of the Development Areas, which has transformed the lives of many thousands from destitution to active work, will be vigorously continued. To aid one of the chief industries in these Areas, a Development Council will be established for shipbuilding and ship-repairing. Labour will take all steps necessary to ensure that this great industry is never again neglected as it was between the wars.

Raise production—lower costs

Unless we continue to increase production as we have done in the last four years, we cannot improve or even maintain our present standard of life; the social services cannot advance or even survive; and our national freedom and independence cannot continue. This is a job for every one of us, pulling together. Private enterprise must not shelter behind price rings and rigged markets. Public enterprise must be vigorous, not easygoing. Drive, public spirit and initiative are required throughout, and from us all.

There can be no advance without planning. Exports must be sold in the right markets at the right price, and imports arranged according to our needs. Only by price control and rationing can fair shares of scarce goods be ensured. Only control over capital investment, distribution of industry, industrial building and foreign exchange can enable us to overcome the dollar shortage and build up a permanently thriving national economy. Yet many Tories still cry 'Scrap controls'. Nothing could be more disastrous.

Industrial democracy

We have begun to build up a flourishing partnership between Government, management and workers. More has to be done, both in public and private enterprise. Too many managements still pay lip-service to joint consultation and then do little to make it effective. They should consult with workers' representatives before decisions affecting them are taken, and not after; they should make available to these representatives the accounts and records on which managerial decisions are based. Upon the trade unions lies the responsibility for further equipping and training their members for service to industry and the country.

The socialised industries

The long decline and demoralisation of the coal industry has been halted. In 1949 output was 28 million tons higher than in 1945. Output per manshift—the best measure of efficiency—has gone up steadily and is now above the 1938 level. For the first time British miners are getting a square deal. Justice for the miner has meant fuel and power for the nation. Nationalisation of coal has saved British industry from collapse.

The vital electricity and gas industries are able to plan ahead for expansion on a large scale. Already new generating stations are supplying more electricity for the home, and more horsepower for our factories.

Britain's public transport system, as road and rail services are increasingly unified, will bring an ever better service to industry and passengers.

And when private monopoly is replaced by public ownership, the steel industry will be responsible to the nation.

Labour will not be content until each public enterprise is a model of efficiency and of social responsibility. The Government must be free to take all necessary steps to that end. The initiative and public spirit of the individual manager must be fostered. New leadership should be given its chance to emerge. The public will be encouraged to make much more use of the Consumers' Councils which have been created for all nationalised industries: consumers should assume the important place which is theirs by right as the owners of the whole concern.

Encouragement for enterprise

Private enterprise must be set free from the stranglehold of restrictive monopolies. Labour's aim is to give a fair chance to everybody in industry, above all to the small concerns which have been the most ruthlessly exploited by trusts, cartels and rings. The less efficient firms will be helped to raise themselves to the standards of the best.

Development Councils on which management, workers and the public are represented will be set up, compulsorily if need be. The drive to apply the results of scientific research throughout industry will be sustained. Technical education will be extended. The Government will be ready in suitable cases to provide manufacturers with buildings and general purpose equipment for sale or hire, as well as finance for approved capital expenditure.

But where private enterprise fails to meet the public interest, the Government will be empowered to start new competitive public enterprises in appropriate circumstances. For private and public enterprise to compete fairly and squarely in the public interest will be good for both.

The Government will also take practical steps to prevent monopolies from continuing to exploit the public. The Monopolies Commission has been established to expose antisocial restrictive practices. Monopoly concerns which cannot be dealt with in other ways will be socialised.

The private sugar monopoly was buttressed by Conservative legislation which is due to expire early in the next Parliament. We propose that beet sugar manufacture and sugar refining shall be transferred to national ownership for the benefit of the consumer. Fair compensation will be paid in this as in the other cases where it is proposed that an industry should be transferred from private to public ownership.

The cement industry is controlled by a tightly organised private monopoly which allows high profits to be made. Labour will convert this essential industry to public ownership.

One industry which will be carefully examined is the chemical industry. If necessary to assure vital national interests, Labour will transfer to public ownership any appropriate sections of this vital industry.

Agriculture and the countryside

We must grow more food at home. The more we grow the more there will be to eat, and the more we shall save on imports. The nation's duty to farmers and landworkers is to give them all the help they need; their duty to the nation is to produce as much as they can with the greatest possible efficiency.

Under the Tories agriculture was plunged into a depression from which it was res-cued only by war. Today agriculture is thriving. The hard work of farmers and farm workers is taking us towards our immediate target of a 50 per cent increase in production over prewar by 1952. There are and will be assured markets at guaranteed prices for as much of the main products of our farms as our farmers can produce. Labour will continue the policies which have transformed the life of the countryside.

We have not reached the limit of British agricultural capacity. Production needs to be raised still further. The first method of doing so is by increasing the standard of efficiency. The 1947 Agriculture Act has given ample powers to ensure good husbandry; they will be used to the full.

In the battle for food the nation cannot afford wasted land. There are still in Britain many thousands of acres of marginal land—idle at a time when every productive acre is needed—upon which food can and will, with Government support, be grown. Where the job is too big for individual farmers to tackle, public ownership will be used as the means of bringing into sound cultivation good food-producing land not fully used. Steps will be taken to promote more efficient marketing and preparation of horticultural produce.

The country's natural resources must be treated and developed as a whole. Britain's vital fishing industry will be encouraged so that its efficiency, both in production and distribution, is further improved. Britain's woodlands will be developed on a large scale and efficiently run by the Forestry Commission and by private and municipal owners. Britain's minerals are an essential and often neglected part of Britain's wealth; all suitable minerals will be placed in public ownership.

Rural amenities

A prosperous agriculture is the foundation of the good life for all our country towns and villages. Labour's aim is to improve the amenities of the countryside as fast as resources permit. Rural areas will continue to enjoy a special provision in housing. Every year more out of date rural homes will be replaced by good houses designed for the housewife and, wherever possible, grouped together in sociable villages. When the Rent Restrictions Acts are dealt with in the new Parliament, the position of tied cottages will be reconsidered and the Unions consulted about the best means of giving to farmworkers the security in their homes enjoyed by other workers.

Nationalisation is bringing electricity to more homes and farms every year. In the next five years, more rapid progress will be made with rural electrification.

Water as a national service

Far too many rural houses, farm buildings and fields are still without piped water. There is plenty of water—in times of flood too much—but not enough in pipes. Great progress has been made in extending piped supplies since 1945. But the work must be speeded up still further and the whole organisation for the purpose improved. Labour therefore proposes that water supply should become a wholly public responsibility so that as soon as possible plentiful water will be brought into every rural area. There will also be an extension of drainage and sewerage for country homes and farms.

Cost of living

In the last five years we have waged a successful defensive battle against inflation. Food subsidies, rationing, price control of essentials, rent control, and the freest possible competition where supplies have been plentiful—these are all helping to keep down the cost of living.

Food subsidies have saved the average family of four about 14s a week on its food bill. Tory spokesmen clamour for large cuts in the subsidies. A vote for the Tories is thus a vote for dearer food. Labour on the other hand will continue the present policy of subsidies as long as present circumstances continue and the need to keep down the cost of living is paramount.

No trade union movement in the world has such a proud record as the British. With unexampled restraint and loyalty, it has co-operated to hold wages steady through these difficult years. The great Co-operative Movement has also exerted a steadying effect on retail prices. It is a fine example of democratic co-operation to meet the needs of the people.

But many prices are still far too high and a burden to every housewife. Our aim for the future is to bring down excessive prices, by increasing the efficiency of production and distribution. Labour proposes to overhaul distribution in the following ways.

- Fruit and Vegetables. More wholesale and retail markets under municipal or other public ownership, together with improved storage facilities, will reduce the present waste in marketing.
- *Cold Stores*. The development of cold storage, an essential service in food distribution, will be effected through public ownership.
- Meat Trade. The nation needs larger supplies of better quality meat. Since the
 Ministry of Food took over the importing and wholesaling of meat ten years ago,
 the job has been done efficiently and economically. The present system of
 distribution should become a permanent public service.
- *Public Buying*. Labour proposes to extend buying by public bodies so that well-made goods can be supplied to the housewife through the ordinary distributors at reasonable prices. This will benefit the public and the retailers, and also maintain the supply of Utility goods.

- Retailing. Competition among private retailers will be encouraged. Subject only to
 the needs of town planning, any citizen should be able to open a shop. Anti-social
 private agreements to keep prices too high will be dealt with.
- Value for Money. An independent Consumer Advice Centre will be set up to test and report on the various consumer goods on the market. Good manufacturers will be protected and unscrupulous advertising exposed.

Helping each other in time of need

Labour has honoured the pledge it made in 1945 to make social security the birthright of every citizen. Today destitution has been banished. The best medical care is available to everybody in the land.

Great Acts of Parliament—the National Insurance, Industrial Injuries, National Assistance and National Health Service Acts—have been placed on the Statute Book. This social legislation has benefited all sections of the community, including members of the middle classes. Hundreds of thousands of middle class and professional families have been relieved of one of their worst anxieties—the fear of the sudden illness, the expensive operation, the doctors' crippling bills. What is needed now is not so much new legislation as the wise development, through efficient and economical administration, of the services provided by these Acts.

Role of local authorities

In this task local authorities have a vital role. The necessity to transfer some functions has not reduced the importance of local authorities. They are performing essential duties, above all in the expanded services of housing, education, town planning and health. Councils have been given new powers to provide fuller opportunities for citizens' leisure hours. Local government will continue to be fostered in all possible ways.

The Conservatives say they fought for Social Security. Against whom? Who was resisting? They voted against the second and third readings of the National Health Service Bill. A year after taking office, Labour had begun to pay out family allowances. But the Tory spokesman in the House declaimed against this as a hasty action and said the same about the increase in old-age pensions. When devaluation made economies necessary, they clamoured for more drastic cuts. Can these Conservatives be trusted to safeguard the welfare of the sick, the poor and the old?

We pledge ourselves to go forward on the sure foundations already laid. The rate of progress will be determined by one thing only—the productive effort of the people.

Children first

Labour has placed the needs of our children in the forefront of national policy. Never before have our babies been so healthy; our youngsters so well fed, clothed and shod. Labour has raised the school leaving age. New schools are being built. The door to higher education is being opened ever wider by the provision of scholarships and grants to Universities. More teachers are being trained so that the size of classes— often still too large—can be reduced. Fees in secondary schools have been abolished.

The policy of putting the children at the head of the queue will be continued. Cheap and free milk and food supplements will go on. Education will in every way be expanded as fast as our straitened means allow. While improving physical standards in the schools, we should never forget we are dealing with people, not statistics, and that the community needs more and more people of individuality who can think for themselves as cooperative members of our democratic community.

The old people

Labour has shown its determination to give the old people a square deal. The guiding principle of our policy is that old age should be a time of recreation and useful service, not a burden of loneliness and sorrow. Pensions have been raised for old people—as also for disabled ex-Servicemen. The Poor Law has gone, and National Assistance stands ready to help whenever insurance cannot do the full job. Old people have benefited much from the National Health Service. More labour-saving homes are being built for old people.

These policies will be continued. And in the next Parliament there will be a review of the working of the National Insurance Act in the light of the economic situation at that time. It will be as well not to leave this review to the Tories; old people know too much of Tory meanness for that.

Industrial assurance

Those who supplement their standard of life in old age or protect themselves against any of the hazards of life by voluntary saving through the Industrial Assurance Offices should receive the best possible return for their money. The Labour Party, believing that the interests of policyholders should be paramount, therefore proposes that the Proprietary Companies should be taken out of the realm of private profit and mutually owned by the policyholders themselves instead of by private shareholders. The interests of the staffs will be safeguarded.

A home for every family

Since the war more than a million new homes have been provided. Yet in spite of this great achievement, the demand for new homes is pressing. We must move forward until every family has its own separate home, and until every slum is gone. Rent controls and rent tribunals will be continued. The law of leasehold will be reformed so as to do justice to householders, shopkeepers and business men.

Labour intends to see that the countryside is not despoiled, that the fastest possible progress is made with the great adventure of the New Towns and that housing estates are developed into communities where people can enjoy life to the full.

Recreation and the arts

The Government has already added greatly to opportunity for the full enjoyment of leisure. We shall continue to do all that can legitimately be done to support the Arts without interfering in any way with the free expression of the artist.

National Parks will be established in the fairest parts of Britain. Footpaths will be preserved and access to the countryside will be secured for all hikers and cyclists. There is also need for more playing fields for the children, and wherever possible these will be provided. A Holidays Council will be established to promote more holiday centres with reasonably priced accommodation for families.

One world of peace and plenty

In the days of Munich, when the Tories decided British foreign policy, the prestige of Britain sank to its lowest ebb for a century or more.

The selfish and cowardly bungling of the Conservative Government landed us in a war which collective security could have prevented and for which the Government had not prepared. The Colonies were shamefully neglected and the democratic aspirations of the Indian people met with continuous frustration and delay. During the last five years, under Labour leadership, Britain has regained her moral position in the Western world and has won the confidence of many millions in Africa and Asia. By applying the moral principles of Socialism to our relations with other peoples, the Labour Government has made Britain a symbol of justice and social advance.

We will continue if returned to power, to work realistically for peace. We will stand firm against any attempt to intimidate us or to undermine our position in the world. But we will remain ready at any moment to co-operate fully with Russia, as with any country that is prepared to work with us for peace and friendship.

Labour believes that the purposes of the United Nations are best served by still closer associations between friendly countries within the Charter. The Labour Government has put particular energy into strengthening the associations of the Commonwealth, the Atlantic community, and Western Europe. These associations are, we believe, not only compatible but necessary to each other as bastions of world security.

In Europe great strides have been taken towards the creation of a new economic and political unity. No country has given more leadership to this great movement than Labour Britain. We shall continue this support and leadership in the years to come, always remembering that we are the heart of a great Commonwealth extending far beyond the boundaries of Europe.

Unity of the Commonwealth

By recognising the desire of Commonwealth countries for complete national self-determination, the Labour Government has immensely helped to strengthen the essential unity of the Commonwealth. In April, 1949, all the Commonwealth Prime Ministers welcomed the free choice of India, Pakistan and Ceylon to join the Commonwealth as full and equal members, and accepted India's decision to be a Republic while recognising The King as head of the Commonwealth. These decisions marked an event of epoch-making importance. They created a bridge of friendship and co-operation between the peoples of East and West which will prove increasingly essential as the movement towards world-wide unity proceeds. These decisions would never have been taken under a Tory Government in Britain.

The natural confidence and mutual affection existing between the peoples of the Commonwealth are one of the world's greatest assets in its struggle for stability and peace. We will continue to strengthen these powerful bonds of union by practical measures of co-operation. Already we have vastly expanded Commonwealth trade through long-term contracts and bulk purchase agreements. Moreover, by finding new sources of supply within the Commonwealth we are helping to bridge the dollar gap.

In the Colonial territories our purpose is to help in creating the economic and social basis for democratic self-government. Moreover we believe that world peace and prosperity will not be secure so long as vast areas are suffering from bitter poverty.

The Colonies are now engaged in a great ten-year plan of development and welfare largely financed by Britain. This plan aims to root out poverty, ignorance and disease. Since 1945, there has been a great increase, compared with pre-war, in the volume of capital goods sent to the Colonies to help in raising their production. Trade unionism, cooperation and social welfare are now fostered so that this new investment shall bring freedom instead of exploitation. A new confidence and energy are springing up throughout Britain's territories overseas.

In the whole of our overseas policy we are proud of the new strength that our country derives from the support of hundreds of millions in all parts of the world who seek a way of life that is neither capitalist nor communist. To these millions Labour Britain is a beacon of inspiration and encouragement.

Put the nation first

We have now set before our fellow citizens the principles and policy upon which the Labour Party will fight the General Election of 1950.

Our appeal is to all those useful men and women who actively contribute to the work of the nation. We appeal to manual workers—skilled, semi-skilled and so-called unskilled; farmers and agricultural workers; active and able managers and adminis-trators in industry and the public services; professional workers, technicians and scientists; and housewives and women workers of all kinds. And just as we in this declaration have put the general public interest first, we ask the electors of all classes to do the same. For if they put sectional interests in front of the general good of the people as a whole, they will tend to damage, not only the nation, but themselves.

The fundamental question for the men and women of the United Kingdom to determine when they vote is this: Shall we continue along the road of ordered progress which the people deliberately chose in 1945, or shall reaction, the protectors of privilege and the apostles of scarcity economics be once more placed in the seats of power, to take us back to the bleak years of poverty and unemployment? Those years must never return.

We are successfully going forward with the great and inspiring adventure of our time. Let us win through together.