



The Red Letter

The letter that keeps you posted...

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Education – Walking backwards is no way to go forward.

In the first week of Theresa May's Prime Ministership she made much of her intention to promote fairness and equal opportunities for all. Typically, once the Tory smoke screen of publicity vanished, May's real intentions were revealed: this time by her strong recommendation for a return to an educational system that would reintroduce secondary modern schools for the majority of pupils, and grammar schools for those few lucky enough to pass an 11+ exam. Such a return to a failed and rejected system, that would blatantly not bring about equal opportunities, has no support among educational experts nor is it welcomed by the great majority of teachers and educationists. It is

possible though that many parents who have not experienced the grammar school system might not realise what their reintroduction would mean for their children. So let us consider what it would look like if it were reintroduced to Bury St. Edmunds. Currently we have some excellent comprehensive schools in Bury St. Edmunds that offer genuine equal opportunities for our children. All children, apart from those whose parents pay for private education, go to similar schools from the age of 11 to 18. Bury's secondary schools are filled with pupils of all abilities who mix, learn, and play together in their own school communities. *Cont/...*



Walking backwards...cont....

The schools benefit from having a complete range of students that reflect adult life in that they haven't been separated into 'goats' and 'sheep' at the early age of 11. One only has to look at the quality of school orchestras, plays, sports teams and exam results in our present comprehensives to see that the complete mix of abilities promotes excellence. But what if those pupils are separated off into the able and less able at the age of 11? For a start, our excellent comprehensives would become secondary moderns having had many of their most able children creamed off to go to the one grammar school in the area. So there would be 'top dogs' at the Grammars producing top results, plays, orchestra, sports teams etc.; and the other schools, the secondary moderns, struggling and failing to achieve similar levels of excellence. Is this what we want for the majority of our children?

It is totally wrong to separate children at this age based upon a single examination. All of us develop at different stages in our lives. Also, some middle class kids whose

parents have money to spare can get special training to pass tests, giving them an unfair advantage.

This unfairness was reflected in the 11+ existed in most parts of Britain and showed up later on when a significant number of pupils at the better secondary moderns began scoring highly in GCEs while many in grammar schools failed quite miserably and left school at the end of the 5th year. Judged by the numbers of pupils who did not go on to do 'A' levels or higher education, my own grammar school failed about 50% of its students. This situation had a profound effect on politicians from all political parties who brought an end to an exam which segregates human beings at the age of 11. Failing any kind of test at this age can have a devastating effect. It can be a slap in the face that lasts a life time! Theresa May will try all sorts of tricks to camouflage an 11+ exam to soften its cruelty and futility, she may even pretend it could be voluntary; but the effects of segregation at 11 will be felt throughout society to the detriment of us all.

- **Mick Wilson**

Refugees: our duty of care to help.

Bury St Edmunds is a long way from Aleppo. Take away your home, your food, your warmth, your language, your parents, your land, your security.

Take the enormous risk of floating in a piece of rubber designed largely as a toy; soaked to your bones, in the dark, crossing a sea alien to you having just witnessed your parents being shot dead by government rebels, or the government itself or air strikes from some other country that you believe has let you down and ignored your plight. Fleeing, because you know it could be you next. Journeying across six or more other countries over a period of ninety days or more; orphaned by the wars, and there you have a child

refugee, or unaccompanied asylum seeking child (UASC) as we call them in England.

This is the story, if you survive.

At present, Ipswich has over fifty child refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Libya and Somalia. They have been 'dispersed' from Kent Immigration Holding Centre. I know because I have been teaching them for the last nine months.

Despite the majority of them suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), despite being in a country they do not understand, learning a new culture, language, way of living, they have diligently attended four days a week, full time a classroom where I have taught them ESOL (English as a Secondary or Other

Refugees...cont...

Language), some of them managing to obtain an Entry Level English certificate. They all have aspirations for a better life than the short one they have known. Currently there are 21.3 million refugees around the world; more than half of them are children; over 3.5 million refugee children do not have access to education. All are from war ravaged countries. These refugees are not going through trauma and violence simply to come to the West in order to claim benefits; they come because they are fleeing our bombs. They come for a safer, more secure life. Society works better when we care for all that are in it.

Later this year I am going over to volunteer in Ritsona, one of the refugee camps in Greece. Whilst the media have remained quiet about the status of the refugee crisis, it is still a challenging situation.

This is a humanitarian crisis and we must all play our part in helping to alleviate this. I am paying for my own flights and accommodation to help in the camp but would appreciate any small donation towards these costs as well as for the resources I am taking; arts materials; ESOL books; pens; paper. We are all witness to the atrocities we see on a daily basis and we need to end this now.

- Elle Zwandahl

Devolution

Should East Anglia opt for devolution? With some misgivings I think the answer is yes. There is no doubt in my mind that the A11 would have been duelled far earlier had we had devolved powers.

As a Councillor, I have been party to information on the discussions (although obviously not involved in them) from the beginning, when it was Suffolk-only to the 3 or 4 county proposition and, finally, to just the Suffolk/Norfolk arrangement. It's fair to say that almost every Council, be they County, District or Borough, is opposed to a directly elected mayor. The Conservative government is very clear, unfortunately, that this point is non-negotiable.

Over the last 6 years, the government has cut drastically the resources available to

local government. In the midst of this, the Chancellor decided to give back some powers and resources that local government should have had in the first place. However, those powers will not go to existing local government structures but to the directly elected Mayor.

The offer though is considerable, and I believe it is better for Suffolk/Norfolk people to have the power to spend in their own hands rather than those of central government. There are promised funds for housing, infrastructure and franchising bus services. If accepting a directly elected mayor is the price to pay for obtaining these powers, I do not see how Councils can refuse given that we are there to do the very best for residents. The final decision on proceeding will be made by participating Councils at the end of November. In particular, there remain concern concerns about the Mayor having the power of veto.

- Diane Hind

Brexit

Well... in a choice between fantastic promises and boring 'same old', who did you think would win? Wonderful, entertaining Boris with £350m for the NHS and slick Farage on 'taking back control' of immigration, borders and finance – both charismatic pied-pipers of the Leave campaign. BUT... having accused Remain of 'Project Fear', they are now actually guilty of Project Lie. Brexit may yet be wonderful, but it's looking less likely as each day passes. Apart from actually admitting that there will be no £350m for the NHS etc, it is apparent that in the trade-off for immigration v. economy, Britain can't have it both ways and Europe, America, China, et al have blatantly told us we can't.

Only greedy Brits think we can take, take, take, and not give anything back. But who are we, these greedy Brits? Many people now feel betrayed by a self-serving, greedy government that allows the blame for Austerity* to lie with anyone but themselves. Corbyn could not stand on a platform with Cameron knowing full well that Tory policies are the cause of most Brexiteers' discontent. The Tories are happy to take the taxes from European immigrants who work in our hospitals, fields and as carers, but they do not spend it on more doctor's surgeries, schools and facilities.

The existing populace have suffered from poorer services as a result and blamed 'immigrants' rather than lack of government funding. Workers in the manufacturing industry, agriculture, environment, science and education will now lose millions of pounds of EU funding and its consequent loss of cross-country collaboration and threat to jobs. The EU does so much to protect the most vulnerable workers in Britain, yet these same people voted in huge numbers **against** their own financial self-interest because they felt they were being ignored by an out-of-touch elite.

The Labour Party's reason for existence is to represent the disadvantaged, lower waged and any one of us who wants a fairer Britain. No longer can it be said that 'all parties are the same'.

The Labour Party does its best in Bury St Edmunds by funding food banks, supporting post office workers' jobs etc., but we need your support too to bring about a fairer Britain.

*Austerity – *definition* - 'living within our means' - T. May.

*Austerity – *fact* - 'taking from the already disadvantaged to give to the tax cheats'
- J. Corbyn

- **Marilyn Sayer (Membership Secretary)**



(Greenpeace's repainting of the 'Brexit' Bus)

Hope For Our Future.

I've never been a member of a political party before. There was never a party that I felt was offering a vision of society that would actually make a positive difference to my family and the community I live in - **until now.**

For years, all politics has given us is spin and lies, so much so, that I had become completely disillusioned with the whole thing. I didn't feel I could believe what was said and the politicians never did what they said they would do anyway. Jeremy Corbyn breaks this mould. He may not look or speak like other politicians and that's the point I guess. He works in a different way, he uses a different kind of language and he has a historical record of sticking to his principles - so when he says he will do something, for the first time ever, I do actually believe him. He offers a genuine opportunity for change and not just the promise of it.

For me, this means that my children will be able to continue their learning in their chosen area if they wish, without it costing at least £9,000 a year.

They will attend schools that have a wealth of resources and excellent teaching staff because Jeremy will invest what is needed in ALL Comprehensive schools to ensure this happens. Theresa May's proposed 11+ exams have a heavy focus on English and Maths and the process of selecting children in this way, at this age, does a massive disservice to the hundreds of thousands of children whose passion and skills lie in the Arts, music or other vocational areas. The potential contribution of each of these children to our future communities is immense and should be encouraged, supported and celebrated.

The NHS is also so very important to my family. Our NHS is being destroyed right before our eyes and it is only when it's gone that some will realise that health support and treatment will then only be available at a price. There are already areas in Britain where people are being charged to attend appointments with GPs. We all know that the private firms coming in to replace NHS services are profit making and will continue to make money out of taxpayers investment. We can do better than this for our families.

Because I am interested, and have paid attention to what Jeremy is proposing, it is obvious to me that there is a massive disconnect between what some aspects of the media are saying and the truth about Jeremy's vision for our society. This is disappointing, as I'm sure some people will make up their minds about him without looking properly into what he is offering. We owe it to ourselves, our families and our communities to take the time to explore the options that are being presented.

For the first time in my lifetime, the Education, Health service and Housing opportunities that I want for my family are a possibility. Jeremy's vision is one I share because when parts of our communities are left behind this will have a negative impact on everyone - crime rates, unemployment and homelessness are just a few examples. We need to take everyone with us on this journey and for me, Jezza is holding the torch and leading the way.

- Ali H (Labour Member - BSE Branch)



www.facebook.com/chrisfillsart

The Labour Party Leadership Election

The past few months have seen the Labour Party in turmoil. Insults - Blairite, Trotskyist, bully, traitor, to name just a few - have been exchanged between party members, leaving pain and scars along the way. Local branches have seen members denounced and reported, memberships suspended, votes denied, in a growing atmosphere of recrimination and division. As a consequence, many of us struggled to recognise a Party that we had loved and respected.

But now the election is over and this is the time to reunite in an urgently required opposition to a destructive and vicious Tory government bent on privatising the NHS, increasing the elitism of our schools and cutting government spending whatever the consequences.

Those opposing Jeremy Corbyn have expressed their lack of faith in his ability to lead the Labour Party back to victory in the next elections. They see him as merely an activist lacking the urban charm, slickness and ultimate voter appeal of MPs such as Chuka Umunna or even David Miliband.

The Party must concentrate on winning the next election - apparently with whatever compromises this takes (voting for or abstaining on austerity measures, bombing and nuclear armaments) - and the

old Socialist rhetoric pumped out by the 'Corbynites' has no relevance to the reality of parliamentary politics or an understanding of what is needed to win an election. As I was recently told by an ex-Labour Party member, "Britain is not a socialist country" and, therefore, we must play to its centrist strengths and avoid alienating those of the middle class who might feel threatened by left-wing policies and those from the working class who aspire to a better life not undermined by benefits cheats or whose jobs might be 'stolen' by immigrants.

However, for those supporting Corbyn, his appeal lies precisely in his history as an activist, as someone outside the Westminster bubble and its cliques, as someone who has not and will not compromise on his firmly held beliefs and values, his lack of sophistication (symbolised by MPs' directorships, expenses claims and the influence of lobbyists), his unwavering support of the Trade Unions and his continued adherence to the true principles of Socialism. The fact that so many people - young people especially but also many previously disaffected Labour Party members - have joined or rejoined the Party must tell us something. It is insulting to the intelligence and commitment of these thousands of people to assume that they are deluded in their belief that there must be a better way of doing politics. *Cont/...*

Labour Leadership...cont...

What Corbyn represents is the desire to abandon the so-called Blairite 'Third Way', which promoted intensifying globalisation, the vital role of enterprise in wealth creation, a limitation of state power, belief in free markets and social justice rather than equality.

This is not to deny the considerable achievements of the Blair governments, but Corbyn represents many things: a return to membership participation in shaping the Party; the hope for a more kind, compassionate, just politics; support for our Trade Unions as the genuine representatives of workers' rights; understanding and supporting those on benefits rather than treating them as freeloaders; providing equal education for all our children rather than encouraging its privatisation through academies and free schools – and now even grammar schools. He allows us to hope in a more just, a more

equal society that will provide opportunities for all our young people, regardless of gender, class, sexuality or ethnic background, one that cares about its elderly. He permits us to believe that the NHS will continue to cure us and care for us and our children and our children's children, free at the point of delivery.

So what the Labour Party now needs to do, whether for or against Corbyn in the leadership elections, is to unite and fight for what Labour principles have always been. We can disagree about methods, we can disagree about policies but we can still discuss our differences and find the necessary compromises to make them work and to make them resonate with the wider electorate, helping us to win the next elections.

- **Nicola Iannelli-Popham (Editor)**



West Suffolk Vineyard Church Storehouse

Bury Branch Labour Party donates food to West Suffolk Vineyard Church Storehouse which provides emergency food and toiletries to those in need in this area. Gatehouse gets its food from the supermarkets. Storehouse gets its food from Vineyard Church members, schools and other churches. Storehouse believes in serving the poor and meeting their needs, and the service is offered free-of-charge with a no-strings-attached policy.

The food bags contain minimum 15 items, and provide breakfast, lunch and dinner for 3 days. A typical food bag for a single person might include: tinned savoury and sweet food, pot noodles, packet soups, biscuits, tea bags, some cereal, UHT milk, some toiletries. At present they are short of tinned meat, tinned potatoes and tinned vegetables, also shower gel.

You can donate 9am-1pm at:

The Vineyard Centre, 15a Out Westgate
IP333NZ - 01284 765874 / www.wsvc.org.uk

Or at King Edward VI School (Spring Lane entrance) on Sunday mornings.

Storehouse has regular contact with 27 agencies in the town like CAB, Women's Refuge, Adolescent Outreach, Probation Service, Social Services, Age Concern and YMCA. They also get to know and help desperate people who have no apparent support. In January to May 2015 Storehouse gave out 407 food bags, in January to May 2016 they gave out 536. Life is getting worse for people in need, we can help Storehouse to help them.

The above account tells you what you need to know about Storehouse and what you can do to help. But there's a lot more to this small organisation - Mum & Baby Baskets, Children's Christmas Presents and Easter Eggs, Christmas Hampers, Helping Hands, brilliant BBQs and Parties... for people in need in our town.

- **Sue Gridley (Bury Branch Labour Party)**



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Young Socialists

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OUR 10 PLEDGES TO REBUILD AND TRANSFORM BRITAIN

1) Full employment and an economy that works for all

We will create a million, good quality jobs across our regions and nations and guarantee a decent job for all. By investing £500 billion in infrastructure, manufacturing and new industries backed up by a publicly-owned National Investment Bank and regional banks we will build a high skilled, high tech, low carbon economy that ends austerity and leaves no one left behind. We will invest in the high speed broadband, energy, transport and homes that our country needs and allow good businesses to thrive, and support a new generation of co-operative enterprises.

2) A secure homes guarantee

We will build a million new homes in 5 years, with at least 500,000 council homes, through our public investment strategy. We will end insecurity for private renters by introducing rent controls, secure tenancies and a charter of private tenants' rights while increasing access to affordable home ownership.

House prices in Bury St Edmunds and wider Suffolk have risen beyond the means of many, particularly the young. Home ownership, for many, is now a futile dream. We will tie private rents to average local earnings and ensure private renters have the rights to a secure tenancy and habitable homes.



3) Security at work

We will give people stronger employment rights from day one in a job, end exploitative zero hours contracts and create new sectoral collective bargaining rights, including mandatory collective bargaining for companies with 250 or more employees. We will put the defence of social and employment rights, as well as action against undercutting of pay and conditions through the exploitation of migrant labour, at the centre of the Brexit negotiations agenda for a new relationship with Europe.

In the Bury St Edmunds area work has been increasingly casualised, wages have not risen in years as the cost of living has soared leaving while those at the top have seen profits soar and their tax bills shrink.

4) Secure our NHS and social care

We will end health service privatisation and bring services into a secure, publicly provided NHS. We will integrate the NHS and social care for older and disabled people, funding dignity across the board and ensure parity for mental health services.

As many as three in every four who need help for a mental illness in the Bury St Edmunds and wider Suffolk area don't receive help for their condition. The Labour party, the party that founded the NHS, would put people and their well being before the interests of private company profit. Our Junior Doctors at West Suffolk are striking to help save our NHS from this Tory Government.

5) A national education service, open to all

We will build a new National Education Service, open to all throughout their lives. We will create universal public childcare to give all children a good start in life, allowing greater sharing of caring responsibilities and removing barriers to women participating in the labour market. We will bring about the progressive restoration of free education for all; and guarantee quality apprenticeships and adult skills training.

Cont/...

10 Pledges...cont....

6) Action to secure our environment

We will act to protect the future of our planet, with social justice at the heart of our environment policies, and take our fair share of action to meet the Paris climate agreement - starting by getting on track with our Climate Change Act goals. We will accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy, and drive the expansion of the green industries and jobs of the future, using our National Investment Bank to invest in public and community-owned renewable energy. We will deliver clean energy and curb energy bill rises for households - energy for the 60 million, not the big 6 energy companies. We will defend and extend the environmental protections gained from the EU.

7) Put the public back into our economy and services

We will rebuild public services and expand democratic participation, put the public back into our economy, give people a real say in their local communities, and increase local and regional democracy.

We will rebuild our economy with public investment to deliver wealth for all, across our regions and nations in a genuinely mixed economy. We will act to 'insource' our public and local council services, increase access to leisure, arts and sports across the country and expand our publicly-controlled bus network. We will bring our railways into public ownership and build democratic social control over our energy.

8) Cut income and wealth inequality

We will build a progressive tax system so that wealth and the highest earners are fairly taxed, act against executive pay excess and shrink the gap between the highest and lowest paid -

FTSE 100 CEOs are now paid 183 times the wage of the average UK worker, and Britain's wages are the most unequal in Europe, tied at last with Greece. Ours is a consumer economy, and our home is a Market Town, with depressed wages, casualised work and over a third of income going to private rent, not enough people have the disposable income to support our local market and town centre. money to spend.

9) Action to secure an equal society

We will ensure that the human rights of all citizens are respected and all are protected from discrimination and prejudice. We will take action to tackle violence against women, racism and discrimination on the basis of faith, and secure real equality for LGBT and disabled people. We will defend the Human Rights Act and we will guarantee full rights for EU citizens living and working in Britain - and not allow them to be used as pawns in Brexit negotiations.

10) Peace and justice at the heart of foreign policy

We will put conflict resolution and human rights at the heart of foreign policy, commit to working through the United Nations, end support for aggressive wars of intervention and back effective action to alleviate the refugee crisis. British foreign policy has long failed to be either truly independent or internationally co-operative, making the country less safe and reducing our diplomatic and moral authority. We will build human rights and social justice into trade policies, honour our international treaty obligations on nuclear disarmament and encourage others to do the same.

- Adapted by Alex Griffin.

A longer, more in-depth version of this article is available on the website:
www.labourburystedmundssuffolk.org.uk

Note to readers:

Due to The Red Letter's space restrictions, some articles will have a longer, more in-depth version on the website where we will be happy to add any forwarded to us, after any relevant editorial adjustments.

Possible Reading list for those interested:

Owen Jones: Chavs. The Demonization of the Working Class (Verso, 2012) The book exposes class hatred in modern Britain where a once-proud working class has been residualised into a violent, degenerate, workless mob. Chavs charts the political demonisation of this once-noble group through the material transformations of the early 1980s and the collapse of manufacturing work.

Paul Adelman: The Rise of the Labour Party 1880-1945 (Longman, 1996) This work provides a comprehensive view of the origins and development of the Labour Party showing how it became a major political force, transforming the political scene in Britain.

Robert Tressell: The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists (Wordsworth Editions, 2012) Published in 1914, after Tressell's death in 1911, this is a classic representation of the impoverished and politically powerless underclass of British society in Edwardian England.

Maxim Leo: Red Love (Pushkin Press, 2014) In this compassionate memoir, Leo examines his family's deep connections with East Germany – his war hero grandfather Gerhard, his committed yet disillusioned journalist mother Anne, his rebellious artist father Wolf – and explores how it feels when the

place called home, with all its delusions, compromises and comforts, confuses you, disappoints you and finally ceases to exist.

Ayelet Gunnar Goshen: Waking Lions (Pushkin Press, 2016) Interlaced with extortion and power struggles, this is a suspenseful social and moral drama; a story of intimacy at the heart of alienation, and of erotic attraction between opposites. But it is also the story of a single choice. The author takes an unrelenting look at the darkest corners of Israeli society and of the human soul. And the reader, whoever he or she may be, will ask, "What would I do in this situation?"

Marilyn French: The Women's Room (Virago, 1997) A bestselling feminist novel, it follows the transformation of Mira Ward and her circle as the women's movement begins to have an impact on their lives. A biting social commentary on an emotional world gone silently haywire.

Philip Roth: Operation Shylock: A Confession (Vintage, 1994) Startlingly, Philip Roth meets a man in Jerusalem called Philip Roth who has been touring Israel—riding high on the author's reputation—preaching a bizarre, reverse-exodus of the Jews, encouraging them to return to their ancestral homes in Europe. Roth decides to stop him, even if that means impersonating the impersonator. This is at once a spy story, political thriller, meditation on identity and unfathomable journey through a volatile, frightening middle-east.

Editor's Note:

As temporary editor of the Red Letter, I feel honoured to contribute to this initiative with which we aim to give a voice to all those truly concerned with the fortunes and progress of Bury St Edmunds, its Labour Party and our society as a whole.

We have seen a steady dismantling of so many of the institutions and policies that affect our everyday lives – the NHS, education, care for the elderly, housing benefits, to name just a few – as well as those of who will come after us, with a grinding impoverishment of life in general.

Due to a disgraceful, scare mongering campaign, we are now (or will be very shortly) outside the

European Union which, for all its faults, gave us, amongst other things, the Bill of Rights, better workers' rights, sensible if challenging climate and environmental targets and the possibility of moving to and working in other countries without restrictions.

All that is over now but we hope that **The Red Letter** will provide a forum for those who wish to express their views – be they for or against Europe, for or against Jeremy Corbyn – so that we can work towards a decent and acceptable agreement for Brexit and society as a whole. We are open to all contributions, on any subject close to your hearts and welcome any form of civilised discussion that can promote a just and equal society for all.

- **Nicola Iannelli-Popham (Editor)**

BURY ST EDMUNDS BRANCH LABOUR PARTY

Contrary to popular belief, Suffolk's third largest market town is not as true blue as you might think.

Labour controlled St. Edmundsbury Borough Council between 1995 and 1999, then as part of a 'Rainbow Alliance' between 2001 and 2003. In 1997, Labour reduced the Conservative majority in the constituency to a mere 368 votes.

Labour has lost a lot of ground in Suffolk, but we are fighting back with a vengeance! We are fighting against Tory cuts to social services and education and the closure of important museums in Bury St. Edmunds which attract tourists and help boost local industry.

Have you thought about getting involved in politics? Maybe you vote Labour in every election and want to know about the people who put leaflets through your door or knocked when you were out? Do you just want to show us that you are there and you are Labour and proud? Have you thought about joining the party?

If any of these apply to you, then get in touch.

The Bury St Edmunds Labour Party Branch meets every third
Thursday in the month at 7.30 pm at:

Oddfellows Hall, 85 Whiting Street, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 1NX



Branch Page: www.facebook.com/burystedlabour

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