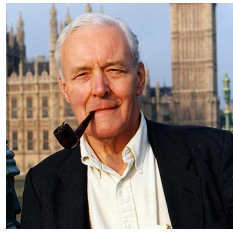


The Fight for Republican Labour



In 1992 Tony Benn set out an alternative republican socialist perspective in a Bill he put before the House of Commons. He made the case for a social and democratic republic not as a long-term aspiration but as an immediate programme. Apart from a few socialist Labour MPs, Benn's policy gained little or no traction in the working class movement. Thirty years later we are facing a much deeper democratic crisis. We have to take seriously the message that Tony Benn left for us. The time has arrived to take up his case and offer the labour movement a new way forward for the post-Corbyn Labour Party.

The Labour Party remains central to the struggle for democracy and the advance towards socialism because of its historic links with the working class movement. However, the party is both a barrier and an opportunity to win a majority to republican democracy in theory and practice. There are two major barriers. First, Labour is loyal to the constitution of the Crown-In-Parliament and this is supported and maintained by the Labour bureaucracy and the Labour Right. Second, this loyalty is shared by the Labour Left through its acquiescence or passive acceptance of Labour as a 'broad church'.

British bureaucratic socialism, the dominant ideology of the Labour left, is indifferent or hostile to republican democracy. Its ideas and policies remain strong by reference to the 1945-50 Labour Government, which established the post war social monarchy. The 1990s saw Labour break with this, on one side by Blair's New Labour, which ended Clause IV, and on the other by Benn's republican socialist programme. The Corbyn movement was an attempt to turn the clock back to 'old' Labour policy as it was between 1945 and 1979 and position itself in the centre ground between New Labour and republican ideas being developed by Tony Benn.

The first barrier to be overcome is therefore the ideology of British bureaucratic socialism. Socialists must persuade the Labour Left to break with the Corbyn programme and embrace the more radical democratic ideas promoted by Benn. He offered a new policy for the left, which was forgotten, or indeed buried, by the victory of New Labour and the neo-liberal loyalist Labour right. The defeat of the Corbyn movement is the time to reassess the way forward. The party, which supported the restoration of the 1945 social monarchy in 2017 and 2019, has to find another way forward.

A republican Labour Party is not simply or even mainly about adopting a programme for a social and democratic republic. Labour has to be the republican party of the working class in practice by becoming a democratic organisation controlled by the rank and file membership. The party will need a new constitution or rules based on the sovereignty of the members. The struggle to transform Labour into such a party is directly connected to the struggle for a democratic state and constitution.

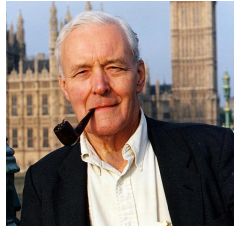
If you want to help, support or participate in the struggle for a republican Labour Party please get in contact with the Left Labour Alliance and the LLA's Republican Labour Working Group.

republicanlabour@gmail.com

Turn over page



The Socialist Fight for Republican Labour



Resist at the Rialto Theatre

11 Dyke Rd, Brighton BN1 3FE (<https://www.theresistevent.com>)

Monday September 27, 3.30pm

Speakers:

Steve Freeman - convenor of the LLA's Republican Labour Working Group.

Tina Werkmann - co-chair of Labour Against the Witchhunt and secretary of Labour Left Alliance.

Kevin Bean - lecturer in Irish politics at the Institute of Irish Studies, University of Liverpool.

Contact the Labour Left Alliance and the Republican Labour Working Group:

Email: info@labourleft.org

Website: www.labourleft.org

