

Government inquiry into democracy must not be allowed to be a “wolf in sheep’s clothing”, warn Greens



16 November 2020

The Green Party has warned a government inquiry into the UK’s democratic process must commit to full transparency and public involvement.

The Greens have made a submission to the inquiry into the government’s Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission [1], calling for it to also look into how power is acquired, maintained, and exercised.

Green Party peer Natalie Bennett said:

“It’s clear that many people lost faith in our democratic process long ago. They see politics as something that is done to them, rather than by or even for them.

“However, as we continue to tackle the pandemic and the climate crisis it is more important than ever that people trust and participate in the decisions that affect their lives locally, nationally and globally, rather than viewing politics as a distant and potentially malignant force.

“So we agree this commission is needed to restore trust and build modern, functional, democratic systems. However, it appears that the government’s intention is that this inquiry be a wolf in sheep’s clothing, whose real objective is to continue the Tory attacks on democracy and human rights.

“Democracy belongs to everybody and should not be under the influence of just one party. That is why we are calling for a People’s Constitutional Convention, in the form of a citizens’ assembly, to be established alongside the Commission.

“We, the people, should decide how power is shared. And so the first priority for this inquiry is to commit to transparency. Deciding on the future of our

democracy is a concern for all of us, not something condemned to an inquiry carried out by a committee almost nobody has heard of.”

ENDS

Notes

1

https://www.greenparty.org.uk/assets/files/Communications/PCAC_consultation_Nov2020.pdf

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Green Party welcomes proposal to increase capital gains tax



12 November 2020

The Green Party has welcomed a report from the Office of Tax Simplification which suggested an increase in capital gains tax could raise £14bn. [1]

Green Party finance spokesperson Molly Scott Cato said:

“We agree with the Office of Tax Simplification that the current tax system encourages people to exploit tax loopholes to minimize their liabilities. We would support the Chancellor in reversing the cuts to capital gains tax begun under Gordon Brown.

“Our policy of a Unified Income Tax goes a step further, consolidating all

taxes on personal income into a single tax, closing many loopholes, and making avoidance and evasion more difficult. It would ensure that people pay the same rate of tax on income from assets as on income from employment.”

Professor Scott Cato, who worked extensively on tax policy during her time in the European Parliament, added:

“While the yields from such a change would be relatively modest, it would be a clear indication that the costs of the pandemic will be shared fairly.”

Deputy Leader Amelia Womack said:

“The pandemic has revealed the depth of inequality in society and it is vital that the costs of this crisis are borne by those with the widest shoulders, unlike after the financial crisis when the rich gained in wealth while the poor became poorer.

“As well as increasing capital gains tax we need to look towards those who have seen windfall profits during the pandemic and introduce windfall taxes on tech companies and on their owners and shareholders.”

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ots-capital-gains-tax-review-simplifying-by-design>

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[Greens call for 2021 exams to be replaced by classroom-based assessments](#)



12 November 2020

Next year's exams in England must be replaced with classroom-based assessments that will allow schools to determine grades, the Green Party has said.

Following the fiasco this summer which saw an algorithm used to determine grades [1], and as evidence emerges of regional inequalities in the impact of coronavirus [2], the Greens education spokesperson has urged the government to set out a clear plan for next year's GCSEs, A Levels and SATs.

Lowthion, a secondary school teacher on the Isle of Wight, said:

"The regional inequalities across England that we have seen during the pandemic means that it would be completely unfair if exams were to go ahead as usual in 2021.

"At the same time, students should not be limited to teacher assessed grades. This would be unfair on both staff and pupils and, as we saw this summer, can be badly affected by an algorithm based on prior attainment rather than current ability.

"Exams in 2021 cannot be business as usual. They must be replaced by classroom-based assessments, which are marked externally over the months until July. Schools must then be trusted to use these assessments to determine the student's overall grade."

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2020/08/19/greens-call-for-overhaul-of-education-system-after-results-fiasco/>

2

<https://www.thenhsa.co.uk/app/uploads/2020/11/NP-COVID-REPORT-EMBARGOED.pdf>

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[Spycops bill “one of the most dangerous pieces of legislation” ever proposed, warn Greens](#)



11 November 2020

- **Jenny Jones, Green peer and former member of the Metropolitan Police Authority, condemns authoritarian tendency in Covert Human Intelligence Sources (Criminal Conduct) Bill**

Green Party peer Jenny Jones has condemned the Covert Human Intelligence Sources (Criminal Conduct) Bill ahead of its second reading in the House of Lords today. [1]

Baroness Jones, who was herself the subject of covert police surveillance for more than a decade, said:

“The police are paid to uphold the law; this Bill allows officers to either act illegally, or to pay others to break it. It is one of the most dangerous pieces of legislation any government has ever proposed.

“The government has learnt a major lesson from the spycops scandal and are passing legislation to ensure that innocent people, who become victims of devastating state intrusion in their personal lives, can never take legal action to get justice.”

The Green Party are particularly concerned about the creation of special units like the Special Demonstration Squad (SDS), which for many years worked outside the normal channels and reported directly to the Home Office. Such dubious activity can undermine the legal process.

Baroness Jones concluded:

“Court cases have collapsed in recent years as it emerged that police officers broke the law and acted as agents provocateurs when undercover. Our democracy requires that nobody is above the law and this must apply in particular to those who apply the law.”

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-21/coverthumanintelligencesourcescriminalconduct.html>

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[Green Party warns Labour's green economic recovery plans do not go far enough](#)



10 November 2020

The Green Party has warned Labour's plans for a green economic recovery [1] are a step in the right direction but do not go far enough.

Responding to the publication of the policy, Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley, said:

"While it's welcome to see Labour taking this step in the right direction we need to face the reality of the task before us, and this kind of ambition simply does not go far enough.

"At the last election the Green Party pledged to spend £100 billion a year for the next ten years to create millions of green jobs. This is the kind of ambition that is needed if we are serious about tackling the climate and social emergencies on our doorstep. [2]

"We no longer have time for the half measures or the gradual realisation we are seeing from the two main parties.

"In a climate emergency we can't be offering a half-hearted green recovery on one hand while bailing out airlines on the other. It's time to match the scale of investment with the urgency of the climate emergency we're facing."

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://labour.org.uk/press/labour-challenges-government-to-build-it-in-britain-and-support-400000-new-jobs-with-green-economic-recovery/>

2

<https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2019/11/06/green-party-climate-election-launch-campaign-bristol/>

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