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2 April 2020

To:
Rebecca Long Bailey
Lisa Nandy
Keir Starmer

By email

Dear Rebecca, Lisa and Keir,

One of you will shortly become the leader of the Labour Party during this most pressing and deadly crisis faced by our country, and the world.

We are writing to reach out to you all, as co-leaders of another party committed to leaving no person behind, to offer to work together in the collegiate spirit these times demand. We want to make sure everyone sees a better kind of politics supporting them through these difficult times.

In Parliament, our MP Caroline Lucas and our peers are working with you and other Parliamentarians to help everyone affected by job losses, interrupted incomes, and the trauma of being separated from loved ones.

The cross-party cooperation that has put forward changes to new legislation, support for small businesses, precarious workers and renters, and has asked for testing, protective equipment for the NHS and essential workers and, importantly, for transparency and scrutiny to continue through the crisis, has been necessary and important.

In our towns, cities, counties and districts, our groups of councillors and assembly members are working hard together, both in opposition and within the administrations our parties control together, to keep public services running, and to support the community-level support networks that are being built up to help the most vulnerable.

This humanitarian work will continue, and shows that when politicians focus on the policies and actions needed to build a better society that supports every citizen to the best of our ability, we really do find we have more in common than divides us.

But all of this takes place in the knowledge that the Government elected just a few short months ago was elected to a majority of seats with a minority of votes. Looking back at the policies we each put forward in that election - and across the world at how countries like New Zealand, where leadership is shared between parties with environmental and social justice as their goals, are dealing with this crisis - it is hard not to feel that we missed a chance in 2019. A chance not only to change the government but also to lay the groundwork for a better kind of politics that could be serving us so well now.

We are therefore writing to you today not only to offer our support and dialogue to serve the country together as we tackle the coronavirus crisis, but also to ask that we start to talk now about the reforms to our voting

system we need to strengthen our democracy and build a better and more resilient politics to serve us in the future too.

We cannot continue to allow our democracy to be warped by a system where many are excluded, policy is not led by those whose voices should be heard and where votes do not match seats. And research shows we can get the democracy we deserve if we stop using the antiquated first past the post system, and if we all recognise that a Parliament elected with a system of proportional representation is needed.

Voters stand to gain from modernising democracy in this way no matter which party they support. The evidence is compelling. Comprehensive research from the University of Michigan shows countries using proportional voting outperform those using first past the post on measures of income inequality, quality of life, education and health, and environmental protection.¹

In Labour, as in our party, the majority of members support a proportional voting system², and no other socialist or social democratic party in any major developed country still supports first past the post.

Whichever one of you is elected, we offer our support in the collegiate spirit these times deserve, and we would like to meet with you virtually as soon as you are able, to discuss both the immediate crisis and how we build a better politics for the future.

With very best wishes,

The image shows two handwritten signatures side-by-side. The signature on the left is for Sian Berry, and the signature on the right is for Jonathan Bartley. Both names are underlined.

Sian Berry and Jonathan Bartley
Co-leaders, Green Party of England and Wales

¹ Research review from University of Michigan lecturer Salomon Orellana's book *Electoral Systems and Governance: How Diversity Can Improve Policy-Making*, Routledge, 2014

² Three-quarters of Labour members want party to back proportional representation. Independent, 17 Dec 2019 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/labour-party-proportional-representation-corbyn-leader-polls-a9249196.html>