



## We have ways of making you talk

### Briefing notes for Labour for a Republic speakers

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The following notes are intended to help you prepare your talks for Labour meetings, whether they be CLP or branch meetings, trade union branches or meetings of Labour-related organisations such as the Fabians or Momentum. They cover Labour for a Republic's views, policies and aims and some of the issues you might want to cover in your talk. They also include a list of sources of information you might want to consult.

There can, however, be no standard talk to a CLP. Some may allow you 30 minutes, others only 10, so it is necessary to decide what to include (and what to leave out) with time constraints in mind. Some CLPs may leave it to you to decide what you focus on while others may ask you to address particular topics. At the time of your talk there may have been a royal event or news story you might want to refer to (often useful as an introduction).

### Our Mission

It is important that those speaking on behalf of Labour for a Republic present what LfaR stands for. You are representing the organisation and need to have a clear understanding of our aims and objectives. These can be found in our **Mission Statement** below:

*Labour for a Republic is a pressure group of members and supporters of the Labour Party who campaign for the Party to adopt a policy which would achieve the abolition of the British Monarchy in favour of a democratic republic.*

*We believe that the continued existence of a hereditary and unelected monarchy is incompatible with the aims and values of the Labour Party.*

*The Labour Party is a democratic socialist party but the British Monarchy goes against every democratic principle and perpetuates a system which gives immense privilege and power to the few at the expense of the many.*

*We cannot hold the Queen and the Royal Family to account at the ballot box. The Queen and Prince Charles have the power to veto bills that affect their private interests and 'royal prerogative powers' transferred directly from the Monarch give the government vast power, without the need for parliamentary approval.*

*We believe that replacing the Monarchy with a democratic republic will make a real difference to our country. It will strengthen our democracy: allowing all citizens the right to choose their head of state, re-balancing power between government, parliament and the people, ending royal secrets and the abuse of public money and giving us an effective head of state who can represent the nation, referee the political process and protect the British constitution.*

## **Our message**

The first stage in preparing a talk is deciding what points you want to get across and the order in which you will make them.

Below we suggest a list of points you may want to make, and the order in which they are listed may provide a framework for your talk. You may prefer to present these points in a different order, but you should try to mention each of them at some stage in your talk.

1. The monarchy is incompatible with Labour's values
2. The monarchy may appear harmless but it is not
3. We want to replace the Monarch with an elected head of state
4. Although we recognise that the Party and the electorate might not be ready for this change, with growing support for republicanism in the Party, we need a debate on the future of the monarchy now.
5. There are reforms, however, that should be made now.
6. There are things that you can do as a CLP (or Labour branch, etc.)

(If there are issues on which you have a personal view, you can say: "LfaR believes that ... although, personally, I would like to see ...").

## **The detail**

Here we expand on the above points. The time you have been given may not allow you to cover everything, although it is useful to have the arguments at hand as they may arise through questions.

### **1. The monarchy is incompatible with Labour's values**

- We are a democratic socialist party, but the monarchy is neither democratic nor socialist
- The hereditary principle should have no place in 21<sup>st</sup> century democracy. In most other modern democracies, citizens are allowed, directly or indirectly, to choose their head of state. Although some other European states have monarchs (Belgium, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Spain), ours is by far the most expensive and most influential.
- The monarchy is the apex of a privileged class. It is about inherited status, power and influence, and of course wealth. It represents the sort of society that Labour wants to change.

## 2. The monarchy may appear harmless but it is not

- The monarch has immense power – e.g. the queen can veto legislation, dissolve parliament, appoint ministers, take control of the armed forces, declare a state of emergency – powers that any despot would love to have.
- Although it is unlikely that a monarch would use these powers, it does not mean that they haven't a huge power of influence:
- Prime Ministers have weekly audiences with the monarch, and they have admitted that their views have been changed through them.<sup>1</sup> If, as many monarchists claim, the Queen is not involved in politics, then why should such demands be made on the PM's time?
- While the queen has been cautious in her political interventions, Prince Charles has not, and he has given notice that as king he will continue to use his influence. Issues on which he has intervened include:
  - Fox hunting – he is in favour;
  - Homeopathy – he persuaded the (then Labour) government to give £1 m to his 'Institute for Integrated Health'<sup>2</sup> for alternative medicine in opposition to professional advice;
  - He has spoken in favour of grammar schools and has promoted the use of unqualified teachers in schools;
  - He has promoted his own (disparaging) views on modern architecture;
  - He has influence planning decisions (for example, in 2010 he lobbied the Qatar royal family to withdraw a £3 bn development plan for Chelsea barracks).
- We do not argue that a monarch should not have views, but it is wrong that the monarch (or prince) should have undue influence over government policy and actions.

## 3. We want to replace the Monarch with an elected head of state

- We want a head of state with a defined constitutional and ceremonial role, elected by all citizens for a fixed period, and accountable to them.
- We do **not** want an executive president on the American or French models – we are not proposing any radical change in Britain's system of government.
- We favour the Irish model – an elected President who is not part of government but who can represent and speak on behalf of the people of Ireland. Recent Irish Presidents – Mary Robinson, Mary McAleese and Michael Higgins – have achieved higher popularity ratings than the queen, have been unifying figures, and have been excellent ambassadors for their country.

## 4. Although we recognise that the Party and the electorate might not be ready for this change, with growing support for republicanism in the Party, we need a debate on the future of the monarchy now.

- We want an elected head of state, but not just yet! We recognise that, given public opinion at present, to advocate an end to the monarchy would be electoral folly. We want to move towards an elected head of state in a way that does not jeopardise the chances of a Labour victory.

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<sup>1</sup> John Major: "The Queen does not involve herself in party politics, but may well offer counsel – perhaps through well-directed questions – that any Prime Minister would be foolish not to consider with care ... there is no one whose personal judgment I would value above that of the Queen."

Tony Blair: "they still have the power to keep us in our place"

<sup>2</sup> This charity closed in 2010 following allegations of fraud and money laundering.

- Jeremy Corbyn has never denied his republican views, but he has made it clear that, at least at present, abolishing the monarchy is something Labour is about to do. However, that does not mean that discussion of republicanism should not be part of our agenda.
- Support for republicanism has been growing across the Party. Labour for a Republic has supporters in both Progress and Momentum.
- Our aim is therefore to continue building this support by promoting debate on the nature and role of the monarchy in order to create the conditions in which it is possible to propose its replacement.

## 5. There are reforms, however, that should be made now

- We want reforms that will reduce the influence and cost of the Monarchy and promote the idea that citizens are sovereign – i.e. the country belongs to its citizens and will be governed by, and only by, representatives chosen by and accountable to citizens.
- Reforms that should be made now include;
  - Parliamentary Oath of Allegiance: instead of MPs being required to swear allegiance to “the Queen, her heir and successors” they should swear that they will serve the interests of their constituents and the country.<sup>3</sup>
  - Freedom of Information (FOI) should apply to the affairs of the monarchy. Legal action by the Guardian forced the disclosure of some of Prince Charles’s ‘black spider’ memos, but as a result the legislation was changed to exclude the royals. The argument for transparency is one with which many monarchist will accept!
  - Monarch’s and Prince’s Consent should be abolished. This protocol requires the consent of the Monarch or Prince of Wales before any bill that might affect the monarchy or prince (even if only as an employer) to be can be debated in parliament. Although we are only aware of three instances in which consent was withheld (and then on ministerial advice)<sup>4</sup>, we do not know how often bills have been revised before being debated.
  - Abolish the Privy Council. This body, composed of senior politicians, allows decisions to be taken in the name of the monarch, thereby giving government a way of circumventing parliament.
  - The Duchies of Cornwall and Lancaster have large portfolios of property, land and investments. Although they operate commercially, they don’t pay corporation tax. They are national assets – i.e. they belong to us. Instead of their income going to the Prince of Wales and the monarch respectively, it should treated as government income for the benefit of the nation.
  - Head of the Church of England. At present the monarch is head of the C of E. In a multi-faith and no-faith society (a majority now say they have no religion), it is wrong that one particular faith (and one denomination of it) should have the status of the ‘established church’ and that the coronation should have a religious dimension.

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<sup>3</sup> After the June 2017 election, 9 Labour MPs took a stand against the oath of allegiance by pledging their allegiance to their constituents before reading out the mandatory words required to take their seats. The MPs were: Laura Pidcock, Richard Burgon, Emma Dent Coad, Jeff Smith, Paul Flynn, Chris Williamson, Alex Sobel, Roger Godsiff and Dennis Skinner.

<sup>4</sup> These bills were: Removal of Crown Immunity (1988), Reform of the House of Lords (1990), and Military Action against Iraq (1999) (which sought to transfer the power to authorise military action from the monarch to parliament – there is now a precedent which requires a Commons vote).

(You are unlikely to have time to cover all of these in detail, so select the ones you think appropriate – or those that Labour for a Republic, and Republic, are campaigning on at the time of your talk.)

#### 6. There are things that you can do as a CLP.

- If you support our aims and objectives, we invite you to affiliate – you will then receive our mailings with information on our campaigns and activities. It only costs £10.
- We ask you to pass our model resolution and send it to the Party. (The resolution may change from time to time, but see our resolution on the oath of allegiance.)
- Sign up members to join our mailing list. Print 5 copies of the sign-up form on the final page of these notes to take with you to the meeting so you can pick up names and email addresses. Please return these by email to: [enquiries@labourforarepublic.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@labourforarepublic.org.uk)

### Sources of information

You don't need to know everything about the monarchy to make a speech, but you need to know enough to be able to sustain your arguments. Getting all the information you need is quite easy and not a long job.

- The Republic website ([www.republic.org.uk](http://www.republic.org.uk)) contains most of the facts and arguments.
- Before any talk, look at recent Republic press releases to see if there has been anything in the news to which you might want to refer.
- The 'What we want' section has several excellent pages. Read the 'Win the argument' page. You might want to print off the information in the 'Know the Facts' and 'Monarchy Myth-Buster' pages and keep them by you in case you need to refer to them if questioned.
- Republic's reports cover some of the issues in further depth:
- 'Royal Secrets Report' and 'How to win the argument' can be bought from the Republic website.
- Republic's 'Cost of the Monarchy' can be found here: <https://www.republic.org.uk/what-we-want/royal-finances>
- Joan Smith's 'Down with the Royals' is available on Amazon – it is a short read and may give ideas on how to give a little colour and humour to your talk.
- In 'The Reform Debates' I have a 12 page chapter which includes the arguments set out above. I have a number of free copies which can be sent to LfaR speakers (contact me on [kghr0812@gmail.com](mailto:kghr0812@gmail.com)).
- In 2012, following a talk to the Leicester Secular Society, I was asked to provide a transcript for publication. This talk was not to a Labour audience, and I was given 50 minutes - much longer than you are likely to get at a Labour meeting. Nevertheless, contact me on [kghr0812@gmail.com](mailto:kghr0812@gmail.com) if you would like a copy.

## Some Dos and Don'ts

- You can challenge the positions of people in your audience, but don't criticise them. Treat your audience with respect. They might not agree with you, but they are Labour members and on your side on most things.
- Don't go overboard in making disparaging remarks about the Queen or the royal family. Criticise, but criticise fairly and objectively - remember many who sympathise with us think the Queen has been doing a reasonable job. It's the institution we should attack.
- Never refer, even jokingly, to Charles 1's beheading as a solution, or to how Russia dealt with the Tsars. Similarly, never make or encourage derogatory references to the royal family's German ancestry. Use their full common names (Elizabeth Windsor etc) or their simple titles (The Queen, Prince Charles etc), not any German names or titles.
- Explain what Labour for a Republic is – an organisation of Labour members, and with members and supporters from all wings of the Party.

## Preparing and delivering your talk

If you are an accomplished speaker you can ignore this section but, for some of us, talking to an audience about LfaR may be a new and daunting experience. Here are a few tips that might be helpful.

- Don't worry if you're nervous – worry if you're not. You're about to do something important and there would be something wrong if you were not anxious about doing it well.
- Always ask the organiser how long they would like you to speak for, when in the meeting you will speak (so that you are not taken by surprise) and how many will be in the audience (you can be conversational with 10 but 100 requires more formality).
- A good talk is generally the result of good preparation. It is not enough to know your subject – when you stand up to speak you need to know what you are going to say, what points you want to make and the order in which you want to make them.
- When you've planned your talk on paper, rehearse it to yourself, remembering that when speaking to an audience you will normally talk more slowly. This will give you some idea of how long it will take, and you may then need to revise it.
- Always use notes. Remember poor Ed Miliband who missed a bit of his conference speech because he tried to do it from memory?
  - Some people, and even some very experienced speakers, prefer to read their speeches from their notes. It's quite a skill, and if not done well it can make a speech sound dull and boring. If you do use this approach, read what you're going to say and then look up and say it – nothing worse than someone appearing to talk to their notes. And in writing notes, remember that the way you speak is not the same as the way you write. The late Robin Day, a professional speaker, always wrote his speeches in full, but with every chunk of text he would deliver on a separate line.
  - Some use notes which are no more than a series of headings. This helps you avoiding a Miliband experience, but you need to know what it is that you will say under each of the headings.
  - My own approach is to write out what I will say in full – this allows me to estimate timings and the balance between the issues. I then edit the notes down to the key words and phrases I want to use.

Whatever form of notes you use, print them in a large font so that it is easy to quickly glance at them while speaking.

- Begin by thanking the meeting for inviting you. Not only is this polite, but it lets you get your voice in action and get used to the acoustics before you say anything important.
- At some point you may want to say why you got involved in Labour for a Republic. If they know where you are coming from, it may be easier for your audience to appreciate your arguments. If you have a role in the Party beyond being a member, say so – it helps to make it clear that we are not just a fringe movement in the Party.
- Your opening is important. If people engage with you from the beginning they are more likely to listen to all you have to say. Work on your first lines – if you get a good start, it also gives you more confidence for what comes later.
- Also work on the ending. You don't want it to appear that you have just run out of things to say or that you've been told your time is up. The ending should be upbeat – something that enthuses the audience.
- Use humour, but only when it helps to make a point. Remember that you are there to inform people, but also to entertain them. No jokes unless they are really appropriate.
- You may get a question you can't answer. That's not a problem – it happens to all of us. It's quite acceptable to say: "I don't know – see me afterwards and I'll try to find out that for you".
- It's better to be too loud than too quiet. Speak to the back of the room and your voice will carry better. (If someone falls asleep, just talk more loudly in their direction.) Some recommend doing voice exercises before beginning (not on stage, of course!).
- Make eye contact with people in the audience – that way they feel you are talking to them. But make eye contact with as many as you can and don't make it appear you are only talking to the person who seems interested.

## **Using PowerPoint**

If you have PowerPoint (or an equivalent projection system) available, great! Having the key points you are discussing projected on a screen helps to focus your audience's attention. Your slides can also serve as your notes.

However, very few Labour meetings will have projection facilities available, so unless you have your own equipment, this may not be an option for you. Don't go to a meeting assuming there will be a projector.

If you do use PowerPoint, remember:

- Check that your equipment is properly set up and ready to use before the meeting – nothing irritates an audience more than needing to wait while a speaker tries to find the correct file or get the projector to work.
- Make your slides simple and clear. Don't clutter them with too much text – only a few large-font bullet points – otherwise many will not be able to read them.

Michael East has produced a PowerPoint presentation which we can provide, although you may need to revise it to fit with the structure and content of your talk.

***Good luck – and enjoy it.***



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