

The purpose of *Renewal*

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The intellectual vibrancy of *Renewal*, as the journal celebrates its 30th year, is testament to the community of readers, contributors and editors who have worked to explore and expand social democratic politics over the last three decades. Our predecessors as editors, Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, Emily Robinson and George Morris, played a key role in achieving what is a core *Renewal* objective: an intellectually confident, pluralist, democratic left politics.

As a journal of social democratic politics, the efforts and fortunes of the Labour Party are – of course – of keen interest and central importance to those now picking up the journal. Without rehearsing here the politics of the last decade, it is enough to say that the electoral failures and defeats for Labour have added political disappointment to the foreboding and injustice of the times: reactionary political figures, the impact of climate change, inequality and the pandemic, and an economy that offers increasing reward to the few and little to the many.

While the Conservative Party seeks to piece itself together again after its latest disintegration, electoral expectations are changing. The pressure and scrutiny placed upon Labour's politicians will duly intensify, and the predicament of Labour's leader will be understood once again through the well-known metaphor of the politician walking across a slippery floor, holding something valuable. It's a context many of the journal's readers will instinctively understand, with different views on the right strategy for Labour.

Yet, for *Renewal*, the task for the journal is the same as it has been over the last three decades, and as pressing as ever: to present ideas that challenge an unequal society; to probe the left's – and Labour's – analysis of our time and our politics; to be critical, and constructive, in debating and pushing for a radical, life-enhancing and transformative left politics. In short, a politics that can change things and can be delivered by what we hope will be a progressive social democratic government in the near future.

Renewal will remain a unique space for long-form writing about all of these things. It will continue to be an open and curious intellectual environment. And the journal

will always provide much-needed space for learning, hearing from academics, policy-makers, activists, and people committed to a transformative left politics that can make a difference to people's everyday lives – all the while avoiding much of the speculation and prediction inspired by weekly opinion polls.

An important part of our task as editors – one brilliantly done by our predecessors – is to ensure *Renewal* represents, and offers, a pluralist space for left politics, and for ideas and debate. For us, that means a culture that embraces listening as well as speaking, and encourages genuine curiosity and interest in the contributions we can all make. One of *Renewal's* objectives has been to not offer merely criticism, but to also put forward ideas for change and alternatives to the status quo. Key to that is understanding the many political viewpoints and policy ideas being discussed, and the many shared values and objectives we hold on the left of politics.

Amid the political change of the last few years, an agenda is being sketched out in and around the Labour Party. Too much focus upon rhetoric can obscure much of this thinking, as commentators focus on the next opinion poll, or parliamentary back-and-forth. *Renewal* will be exploring this agenda, starting with this issue. The journal will offer insight into the ideas and strategies being considered, and the critical engagement that this journal can uniquely provide. As the experiences of centre-left governments across the world show the possibilities - and the challenges - of power, we will offer in-depth analysis of their fortunes and their strategies, not to merely applaud, but to better understand the strategies, possibilities and perceived constraints.

Outside and around this agenda are the ideological themes and issues being debated in think tanks, social movements and political organisations across the world. The journal will be exploring these too, and creating regular forums for intellectual exchange and debate. There are different conversations happening about political ideas in different places. *Renewal* offers the opportunity to bring those conversations together.

There have been many false dawns on the left. Past issues of *Renewal* demonstrate that while our electoral hopes have often been disappointed, these have not been wasted moments. They have led to thinking and rethinking, and new ideas to confront ever greater challenges. As we move towards another electoral test for Labour and the left, the journal builds upon the thinking that has been done over recent years – and focuses on a source of optimism: ideas that can change the world.

The authors are the new editors of Renewal.