

Alliance for
Green
Socialism

**GENERAL
ELECTION
MANIFESTO
2019**

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MANIFESTO
2019**

AGS

Alliance for Green Socialism

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The *Alliance for Green Socialism* doesn't
think it knows all the answers.

How could our policies and this manifesto be improved?

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Alliance for Green Socialism

GENERAL ELECTION MANIFESTO 2019

Britain - and the world - is still trying to recover from a devastating financial and economic crisis, with millions out of work and millions in semi-employment. Wages, pensions and savings are all hit. We face a number of environmental crises - particularly global heating - that will destroy our society. The two things are linked.

The response of our (then Tory & LibDem) government was to pour unimaginable amounts of our money into the pockets of their banker friends and to talk loudly about global warming - but do nothing at all to address the problems which led to the twin crises. Apart from a little cosmetic tinkering, everything is supposed to carry on as before: dodgy banks, low wages, huge bonuses, new runways and more fossil fuels and nuclear power stations.

Ordinary people (especially the poorest) are expected to pay the price of the failures of the financial system, just as ordinary people will have to carry the burden of global warming. For bankers and politicians it's just back to the trough.

Labour sold out its supporters and became just another Tory party. Corbyn has brought more left policies but needs a stronger focus on the environment crisis.

This manifesto lays out policies to make all our lives better, stop exploitation, and to prevent us and our children living – or dying – on a failing world. Some of these policies cost little or nothing. Some would save money. Some would be expensive. Can we afford to do these things?

The first answer is simple. **Can we afford not to?** If we carry on as we are then climate change and other environmental damage will destroy our way of life. The planet may carry on but our civilisation will not. Besides, in the long term, renewable energy is cheaper than fossil fuels.

The second point is a comparison. In 2008 the government committed over a trillion pounds – that's over £1,000,000,000,000 – to save our corrupt and incompetent bankers. Britain annual gross domestic product is only around one and a half trillion pounds. So nearly a year's national turnover was spent just on the banks. Compared to that our proposals are **quite modest**.

The third response is that we need to make tax truly **progressive**. If people on very large incomes paid a much higher percentage, that would yield billions. We should reduce flat rate taxes like VAT and bring in a properly progressive tax system. The introduction of even an extremely low rates of wealth, property and transaction taxes could again yield tens of billions.

The fourth response is that we need to **collect tax** effectively. For many large corporations and very rich individuals, tax is simply optional. Some pay no tax at all, while most pay far less than they should. We must rewrite the tax laws - especially those governing multi-nationals - to make them simple and effective, and reform the collection process. That would yield over a hundred billion pounds a year.

Finally, we must **stop wasting money** on expensive projects that are irrelevant or actually harmful. Privatisation makes services more expensive as well as worse. Cancelling Trident replacement would save a hundred billion pounds. Our two huge new aircraft carriers and aircraft are an eight billion vanity project. And, of course, we all know the final costs of these wasteful projects will be double or triple the current estimates. And let us have no more costly and counter-productive foreign wars.

All this money could be diverted to necessary things

We should move away from our history of imperialism and exploitation of other countries, backed by military force.

What is wrong

- Britain being a poodle of the United States
our foreign policy being based on cynical calculations of self-interest
- the gap widening between rich and poor nations
- Britain exporting its flawed financial models, such as privatisation, to the detriment of other countries
- the European Union being undemocratic and dominated by large capitalist corporations
- most international organisations, for example the World Trade Organisation, being there to promote capitalism, not to benefit people
- the United Nations being dominated by the old powers and therefore undemocratic and ineffective

AGS policies

The AGS will work with other countries to:

- cancel debt in the poorest countries
 - reduce inequalities between countries more broadly
 - reduce and cushion the effects of climate change on people in the poorest parts of the world
 - democratise the EU, giving a real role to its elected parliament
 - reform the United Nation to make it representative of the world's people
 - uphold the rule of law in international affairs
 - ensure fair access to scarce resources, including oil and water, with access to clean water for all
 - promote public and mutual forms of economic organisation
 - support the reunification of Ireland as a single state under one government
-

Plus Corbyn's control of the Labour Party is still strongly contested by the Blairites.

The big parties offer a poor choice. Even the Green Party goes into coalition with Tories (eg Leeds) and pushes through cuts when in local control (eg Brighton).

The Brexit vote has led to a sharp swing to the neo-liberal right and an increase in the profile of the far right and places under threat the rights gained by women, the LGBT community, and black & minority ethnic people.

Capitalist greed is destroying the world in which we live, through global warming and environmental destruction. Even on their own terms the capitalists have failed - they had to go cap in hand to governments around the world to bail them out at our expense.

The Alliance for Green Socialism stands for a complete restructuring of our economy and society. We must stop the chase after unlimited growth and huge profits which drives us to environmental destruction and a grossly unequal society. We need an economy based on fairness and cooperation, with common ownership of utilities replacing what are now for-profit big businesses.

This manifesto sets out policies which are the first steps in the direction of a renewed society based on the skills and hopes of ordinary people, not the greed of a few.

BREXIT

Parliament not prime minister

Parliament is in charge of Britain's laws and constitution, not the Tory government. It must be Parliament that makes the final decision on Britain's withdrawal from the European Union and the terms of that withdrawal. Such a profound constitutional change cannot be in the hands of one political party – especially not a party that created this situation purely for internal Tory party reasons.

The Tories want to use Brexit as an excuse to attack workers' rights further and make yet more cuts. They see an opportunity to move decisively to the racist, xenophobic right and roll back all the gains of the last century. We must not allow a Britain outside the EU to become the low wage, tax haven economy explicitly threatened by Boris Johnson.

Single Market and Customs Union

If Britain is to withdraw from the European Union politically, we must keep our vital free-trading relationship with Europe. Half of what we export goes to the EU: £211bn worth, supporting 4.2m UK jobs. It is complete pie-in-the-sky to think we can go back to the "Empire Preference" of the 1930s; or rely on trade deals with a USA run by the isolationist madman Trump.

We must retain access to the EU single market, and stay in the EU Customs Union, allowing free trade in both directions. Our economy relies on this. Indeed, many of those arguing for Brexit argued this would still be the case if we withdrew. Other countries, like Norway, already have this kind of arrangement. They are outside the EU politically, but part of the single market trading group.

AGS policies

- British foreign policy independent of US, based on fairness and respect for other countries
- prosecution of Blair for waging an illegal war on Iraq under cover of lies
- an international enquiry into arms trading by developed nations and their support for repressive regimes
- provide resources to help lessen international tensions where we bear a responsibility for creating them
- no foreign wars without a clear moral and legal basis
- stop the British sale of arms and military equipment to Israel and end any preferential trade agreements
- oppose any continuation of the US economic blockade of Cuba and stop collaborating in that blockade
- decommission all nuclear weapons
- cancel such white elephant projects as Trident and its replacement
- oppose the use space as a 'theatre of war'
- close all US military, communications and spy bases in the UK and the overseas territories for which it is responsible
- close British oversea military bases
- end all arms exports to countries with oppressive regimes, those involved in an armed conflict, where there is tension or where spending on weapons will threaten the social welfare of the country
- introduce measures to regulate and reduce the arms trade until it is abandoned, immediately ending all government subsidies and support
- cease all permission and all facilities for extraordinary rendition and all British collaboration in torture
- withdraw from NATO

International

AGS aims

Britain is a small to medium sized country, which needs to cooperate with others, wherever possible. It needs to work with them to promote eco-socialist values, models and solutions throughout Europe and the world as a whole.

- wherever possible use non-custodial means, eg probation, to deal with offenders, as this reduces re-offending
- restore full legal aid and ensure law centres are available to all
- restore and defend trial by jury for all serious offences and the presumption of innocence of defendants
- ban absolutely the use of torture and of information extracted by torture
- cut world-record numbers of CCTV cameras spying on us and rely much more on encouraging witnesses to report wrongdoing
- decriminalise cannabis and review the supply and demand of other drugs, including tobacco and alcohol; the approach will be to regard all these primarily as public health and educational issues, much reducing the role of the criminal law
- repeal 'sus' laws allowing arbitrary stop and search

Peace & Foreign Policy

AGS aims

International relations must be based on fairness and international law, not commercial exploitation and military force. We accept Britain's historical responsibility for many communal tensions across the world and in Britain itself.

We believe that high military spending is unacceptable and only reinforces a militaristic approach to problems rather than their peaceful resolution.

What is wrong

- Britain allows the USA to dictate our foreign policy, even following the US into illegal wars
- we back repressive dictatorships like Saudi Arabia, and aggression as a policy tool
- we support, shield and favour Israel in its occupation of Palestinian land
- Britain allows and promotes extraordinary rendition for torture
- Britain has nuclear weapons that could never be used legally or morally
- we spend far too much on arms, including nuclear weapons
- the use of military power to control scarce resources, such as oil
- we still maintain overseas military bases and overseas colonies

Freedom of movement

Already businesses from farmers to hotels are panicking about losing access to the European workers on which they depend. Far more important, our National Health Service is dependent on foreign workers – everyone from cleaners and nurses to registrars and consultants. The NHS would collapse without these workers.

We must also protect the millions of British citizens who live or work in EU countries - and equally be fair to EU nationals who live and work here. We need to retain freedom of movement.

Of course, it is also true that some employers use foreign workers to undercut pay rates negotiated by British trade unions. We would legislate to prevent this, requiring everyone working in Britain to be paid the full British rate for the job.

Protection of rights and environment

Boris Johnson's Tories intend to use Brexit to remove a huge range of protections we currently enjoy.

These include key environmental protections. It is EU law that the Tory government is currently breaking on the air pollution that kills 40,000 a year in Britain. Water quality is currently maintained by EU rules. It is EU laws that address CO₂ emissions - where reductions are vital to stop global warming.

A whole raft of employment rights are protected by EU Directives. These include rights if your employer is changed by a transfer, protection against insolvency, discrimination because of race, belief, gender or sexual orientation, pregnancy and parental leave, protection of young and of temporary workers. Also at risk are health and safety rights.

JOHNSON IS A THREAT TO DEMOCRACY

Crisis

AGS aims

A sensibly run economy should be stable, without periodic panics over slight technical changes. Our economy should not be subject to cycles of “prosperity” and “recession”. These cycles are an inevitable part of capitalism. In a rational economy, only real-world problems - such as bad harvests or running out of a resource - should have significant economic effects.

Where economic problems do arise, the pain should obviously be borne more by the rich than the poor. Our first priority should be to ensure that everyone can achieve an income sufficient for their needs.

What is wrong

- our capitalist economy is based on endless growth; if that growth falters, even for a short time, the system starts to fall apart
- increasing shortages of key resources mean we have long term problems that cannot be solved by “growth”
- environmental problems - especially global warming - adversely affect the economy
- when the economy goes bust, those at the top ensure that those at the bottom - workers and unemployed - pay the price in job losses and cuts in wages and benefits
- the stunning greed of capitalists, making money out of dud mortgages and fictional “financial instruments” has driven the global economy, and ours, into a recession
- the government has given vast amounts of our money to its friends in the banks, without much effect in the real world
- too much taxation of the poor and too little of the rich, plus a failure to collect tax from the rich

AGS policies

- move away from endless, unlimited growth towards a rational and stable economy providing what people need
- invest heavily in environmentally sound public works, such as renewable energy, rail, sustainable housing and home insulation, creating a million climate jobs
- urgently address the effects of global warming including flooding, thus creating jobs and protecting our future

Law & Policing

AGS aims

Everyone should be enabled to feel that they have a stake in society and that their police are part of their local community. People should generally feel safe out of doors, because other law-abiding people are almost always on hand. At home, the elderly and other vulnerable people need to be able to rely on their neighbours.

The criminal justice system needs to be seen to be fair and its main aim should be to minimise re-offending rates. The police should act on behalf of their communities, not as a repressive arm of the state. Access to the law should be affordable for all.

What is wrong

- huge cuts to legal aid mean many are unrepresented unless they are rich
- the government fostering a climate of fear - of terrorism and of other crime
- lack of accountability of police and secret services, leading to justifiable distrust of them
- increased spending on prisons and other means of repression
- reducing individual rights under the law and condoning and enabling the use of torture
- CCTV cameras everywhere, but not in fact reducing crime
- a crazy, expensive and entirely futile “war on drugs”, generating crime and criminal gangs

AGS policies

- educate and support communities in looking after each other
- support local authorities in making streets, estates and parks welcoming so that law abiding people are happy to be there and feel safe
- move away from nationally organised policing and rely on local police services, accountable locally
- make the secret services openly accountable to parliament and subject to the law
- switch resources from prisons towards better education and support for former offenders and support for the victims of crime

- retention of information on all our emails and phone calls
- vetting and recording of travel information
- health and child systems that make sensitive personal information available to hundreds of thousands of people
- laws reducing our rights to protest
- erosion of the right to a fair trial
- internment and control orders
- failure to end unjust discrimination, including that against women, and non-white races

AGS policies

- continue to oppose ID cards
- scrap databases of personal information
- end the dreadful practice of internment without trial and control orders
- keep the right to trial by jury
- reject the use of enormous, connected databases such as those for health care and children's data
- support international laws to prevent child and people trafficking
- encourage acceptance of different lifestyles, sexualities and cultures
- take specific measures to combat race and religious hatred, including anti-Islamic and anti-Jewish prejudice
- give positive support to people with disabilities
- combat discrimination against gypsies
- tackle discrimination against lesbians and gay people
- defend the rights of refugees and asylum seekers
- legislate for real equal pay for women
- support women's rights to control their own bodies and make their own choices.
- ensure that sex education, advice and counselling on contraception and abortion, and facilities for these, are readily available in Britain, and support the UN and other agencies in promoting this

- protect public services and benefits from cuts, and reinstate those that have been cut
- ensure the rich are taxed appropriately - and actually pay their taxes; outlaw "creative accountancy" and the use of tax havens
- move the tax load from VAT, which penalises the poor, to taxes that are paid by the rich
- limit top executives to a sensible pay level
- bring all non-mutual banks into public ownership and control (after all, we've already paid for them!) to provide credit to individuals and industry
- restrict maximum interest on personal loans to discourage exploitative money lenders
- make mortgages publicly provided and controlled, treating houses as places to live rather than as investments
- protect workers by providing support for useful industries and services
- change company law to make companies consider the interests of workers on a par with shareholders

Economy

AGS aims

A Green Socialist economy will be about production for need, not production for profit. It will aim to support our real quality of life, not increase "Gross National Product". Meaningful, useful and fairly paid employment should be available for everyone who is able and wants to work. Very large scale enterprises will be publicly owned and democratically accountable. Local production will be encouraged and unnecessary transport discouraged.

What is wrong

The capitalist economy involves:

- cycles of "boom and bust" stretching back more than 150 years
- the pursuit of endless "growth," as measured by "gross domestic product", for its own sake and to produce profit for the few
- the wasteful production of many goods and services which people didn't need
- the production of things that are positively harmful (eg GM food,

- weapons of mass destruction)
- huge amounts of advertising to persuade people to buy all these things they don't need
- the rich few getting even richer, while the poor majority got poorer
- shortages of raw materials
- exploitation of poorer countries, causing hunger and disease in many parts of the world
- frequent wars for access to resources and to markets

AGS policies

The AGS will move to create a Green Socialist economy in which:

- economic policy will support increase in well-being rather than growth in capitalist measures of production such as GDP (Gross Domestic Product)
- the interests of the environment will come first, with large scale programmes of public works to increase sustainability and cut pollution, including greenhouse gases
- instead of “gross domestic product”, new measures will be developed of well-being, reflecting what ordinary people really most need, such as food, shelter, effective health care, education, justice and personal development
- tax will be highly progressive - the rich will pay a much higher proportion of income than everyone else
- there will be a tax on wealth above a reasonable limit, at a low percentage rate
- public expenditure will be paid for out of taxation, over time, without borrowing from the money markets
- interest rates will in time stabilise at minimal levels
- houses will be for people to live in, rather than “investments” to make money
- mortgages will be publicly provided and controlled, at an affordable rate
- there will be a big increase in affordable housing, particularly local authority housing for rent
- all non-mutual banking will be taken into public ownership and control
- the “City” and other unproductive sectors will be allowed to wither away, with their resources being put to better use
- housing cooperatives will be encouraged
- the co-op will become the model for enterprise in the commercial sphere

- abolish the monarchy and institute an elected presidency with limited powers, along the lines of the Irish presidency
- replace the House of Lords with an elected second chamber – not a set of appointed ‘pals’
- make all MPs subject to recall on the basis of a petition signed by an appropriate proportion of electors
- block any increase in state funding to political parties
- reform the parliamentary process for more democratic debate and to stop the prime minister being an elected dictator
- stop any increase in EU powers unless it becomes genuinely democratic

No MP of the Alliance for Green Socialism will increase her or his income to above the average wage of a skilled worker

Freedom

AGS aims

We want an open, free and truly democratic society that recognises and upholds human rights and freedoms. Britain's society is all the richer because it comprises a variety of cultures, races and beliefs. People are all different and should have equal rights and opportunities, plus any necessary support, regardless of race, gender, belief, sexual orientation, disability and age.

We should recognise society's obligation to enable people to access the basics of life and be free from poverty.

The AGS believes people have the right to make their own decisions on whether to have children, free from coercion based on politics, religion or poverty.

What is wrong

Our rights and liberties are being removed at an alarming rate. This is happening in the name of “fighting terrorism”, which is rubbish. Intolerance is often created for political ends. Repressive measures include:

- excessive surveillance, especially by CCTV
- repressive laws introduced using the excuse of a “war on terror”
- databases holding enormous amounts of private information, including DNA - there are even moves to patent DNA!

Democracy

AGS aims

The Alliance for Green Socialism sees democracy as essential for social change. Governments must be accountable to the people they govern. We must progress towards an ecological and socialist society in a democratic way, with the support of the people.

What is wrong

- the lack of meaningful choice between the major parties has made a mockery of democracy - whoever you voted for you got a right-wing, privatising, neo-liberal government
- our “first past the post” voting system stifles small alternative parties
- the House of Lords is still not elected
- local councils have been reduced to powerless agents of central governments
- MPs are largely corrupt and spineless; they “represent” their own careers, not the people who elect them
- despite the election of MEPs, the EU has a totally undemocratic structure

AGS policies

- replace the ‘first past the post’ system of voting for the House of Commons with a system which encourages people to vote for the candidate they genuinely prefer, rather than the one they think has a chance of winning
- ensure that no expenses will be paid to MPs other than those absolutely necessary for the performance of their parliamentary duties; all expenses will be subject to strict limits based on cheapest reasonable cost and receipts will always be required; all claims will be scrutinised by a body independent of parliament
- reform councils to make them accountable, open and accessible so that they can properly represent their local communities
- support direct community involvement in making decisions
- ensure any central funding of local councils is both fair and predictable
- restore the financial and practical independence of local authorities

Corporate Power

AGS aims

The global power of money must be countered at national and inter-national levels. This will need real democracy with real power, including the creation of new democratically controlled institutions. We must ensure that ordinary people’s needs are put ahead of those of the global financial elite. Democracy must always come before corporate power. The media should be open and objective.

The present capitalist system puts finance and corporations before people, with:

- international trade treaties that put corporations legally on a par with countries and demolish the safeguards to food, safety, workers’ conditions, etc, built up by democratic states
- massive multi-national corporations, accountable to no-one, more powerful than elected governments
- large corporations and rich individuals paying little tax, or no tax at all, using tax avoidance or evasion
- VAT, a flat rate tax, penalises the poor
- exploitation of vulnerable workers, including women and children, in the poorest parts of the world
- elected governments doing what the super-rich tell them
- global institutions such as World Trade Organisation (WTO) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) putting the interests of capital before the interests of people and countries
- regional and global institutions forcing through privatisation of public services
- cuts in services as the privatised monopolies make as much profit as possible from their customers
- mass media, with very few owners, serving big capital rather than the people

AGS policies

- oppose hugely damaging treaties
- work with progressive forces across the world to create new international bodies, under democratic control, to regulate economic activities in the interests of ordinary people
- ensure that proper taxes are paid by the rich and by companies

- reverse privatisation and bring public services under the best possible popular governance
- improve public services, reflecting ordinary people's priorities
- close all tax havens on UK territory and on territory for which the UK has responsibility, including the Channel Island and Caribbean dependencies; make the use of tax havens illegal
- apply the simple principle that money earned and money spent in this country should be taxed in this country
- ensure ownership of the mass media is held by British citizens and is not monopolised

As a party, the AGS refuses to accept donations from rich individuals and large corporations, because this would tend to undermine its policies.

Employment

AGS aims

Everyone who is able and wants to work should be able to do so, in a way which benefits society as a whole. Wherever possible, jobs should be satisfying. Workers should be fairly paid in recognition that the economy depends on them. Society should be organised to enable everyone, in work or unable to work, to have a fair income sufficient for their essential needs. Cooperative, local and small scale enterprises should be encouraged.

What is wrong

The present capitalist state of affairs is characterised by:

- bosses exploiting workers, careless of their responsibilities towards them
- government policies since Thatcher actually destroying industry and creating unemployment
- many workers being paid less than the fair amount for their jobs, including being paid less than the legal minimum wage
- workers lacking job security
- large numbers of people routinely unemployed
- insufficient help and support for those out of work
- ◇ periodic recessions, with large scale unemployment

- ensure that all publicly subsidised arts events have a proportion of seats at prices that anyone can afford.
- extend footpaths and public rights of way on private land
- Improve funding to local authorities to run youth services

Social Media

AGS aims

Social media should be available to enhance access to knowledge and communication, for the benefit of users.

What is wrong

- social media are privately controlled and run for profit
- social media companies gather and hold a staggering amount of data about all their users
- the gathering and use, including sale, of private data by companies is beyond any effective control
- social media in practice both disseminate false information and facilitate the spread of far-right ideas and hate speech
- social media in practice facilitate grooming
- social media are increasingly used to manipulate democracy

AGS policies

The AGS recognises the seriousness of the problems listed above and is considering what practical policies can best address them without undue interference with free speech and without losing the many advantages of internet use.

Sport, Arts & Leisure

AGS aims

Sport and the arts should belong to everyone and should be available for everyone to enjoy. The aims of art and sport should be personal development, health and enjoyment – not making money.

What is wrong

- sport being regarded as something to be marketed for profit, not something to be enjoyed
- arts funding being over-centralised and concentrated on “upper class” art, with funds going to London and not to other parts of the country
- local authorities closing down and selling off sports facilities
- sports - particularly football - being dominated by rich individuals and corporations, including TV companies, to the detriment of their supporters
- some sporting bodies, such as FIFA and Formula One, being blatantly corrupt
- sport and the arts being downgraded or driven out of the school curriculum, especially as sports grounds and facilities are sold off

AGS policies

- encourage schools to provide opportunities for all children and young people to enjoy and fully appreciate sport and the arts, both as participants and as spectators
- require by law that local authorities provide local facilities for sport and cultural activities, including sufficient playing fields and swimming pools to allow every school pupil to participate fully
- make it easier for supporters’ trusts and other cooperative bodies to take control of sports clubs, including professional clubs
- ensure that all major sports events can be seen on free-to-view television channels
- to prevent the directors of sports clubs taking undue salaries or profits
- devolve arts funding to democratically run local authorities
- ensure that local communities receive funding to run events that celebrate local culture

- the rich enjoying incomes that are too high, at the expense of everyone else; globally the richest 1% own as much as the poorest 50%
- oppressive legislation, which prevents legitimate trade union activities
- excessive charges to access employment tribunals, which are then unable to rectify wrongs
- many jobs existing which benefit the rich but which are harmful to the wider community

AGS policies

- run the economy so that it is more stable
- repeal all the anti-trade union legislation, brought in since 1979 by Conservatives and Labour
- increase the minimum wage to half the adult male average wage
- outlaw unfair zero-hours contracts
- ensure the benefits of increased productivity go to workers
- abolish fees for going to an employment tribunal and strengthen the powers of tribunals to put wrongs right, for example by enforcing the reinstatement of workers who have been wrongly sacked
- strengthen the courts’ powers to sort out claims of unfair pay
- ban huge pay packages for bosses and ensure that the rich actually pay their fair share of taxes, ie a lot more than everyone else
- ensure that the benefits system, the education and training sectors and the careers advisory service all work in support of those not currently working and that they can also access advice and support about their broader needs
- make companies and their bosses accountable under the criminal law for violations or neglect of their responsibilities towards workers, for example in respect of their safety
- penalise bosses who offer jobs which are harmful to the wider community, eg arms trading, hedge fund management
- promote jobs in renewable energy, going for “One Million Climate Jobs”
- consult with the trade unions and encourage union membership and activities

Pensions

AGS aims

A civilised society must provide for its elderly people so that they can live full lives in reasonable comfort.

We should provide reliable and adequate pensions that are not dependent on the stock market.

What is wrong

Many people, young and old, face old age with no prospect of a decent pension.

- the state pension is too low, having been severely devalued
- many state entitlements are means tested
- workers' pension schemes being open to abuse and misuse by their employers
- company pensions were looted by companies taking "pension holidays" in good times
- occupational pension schemes based on final salary are collapsing, having been undermined by government policy (Labour, ConDem & Tory) on accounting and tax and by the economic crisis
- millions have been pushed to invest in private pensions, to the benefit of the fat cats of financial services more than themselves
- employed people are being perpetually subject to the argument of the 'finite national cake', a constraint which employers never apply to themselves

AGS policies

- funding for basic pensions will be "pay as you go" where current workers pay for the support of retired workers, not dependent on gambling on the stock markets
- a progressive tax system will provide sufficient money for any necessary top-up in lean periods
- the state pension "triple lock" will be retained, with pensions linked to the higher of prices, earnings and 2.5%; it will be universal, independent of contributions and not means tested

- too much long distance commuting
- too many long haul vacations
- too much spent on roads and too little investment in more carbon-efficient transport such as rail
- extravagant tastes for out-of-season produce
- unnecessary travel when electronic communication or phone would do as well
- a lack of both integrated systems and planning of transport
- public transport that is infrequent, uncomfortable and far too expensive

AGS policies

- bring all public transport, especially the railways, back into public ownership and control, to create a planned, integrated public transport system
- nationalise road haulage
- encourage, by planning and tax means, local production for local consumption, especially of food
- prohibit or discourage the unnecessary movement of materials, livestock and produce
- tax aviation fuel like other fuel
- increase taxes on private vehicles and fuel
- make the publicly-owned systems much more carbon efficient
- make public transport free for pensioners and easily affordable to everyone
- investing in carbon-efficient transport infrastructure, particularly rail and other public transport
- explore the potential of reopening railways closed by Beeching
- encourage cycling and walking by improving cycle paths and pedestrian areas
- encourage working locally
- encourage holidaying more often nearer home
- ensure that public transport is safe, comfortable, convenient and cheap (or even free) to the user, at least for local journeys
- explore the potential of canals as a means of transportation

- ensure that councils are legally obliged to provide adequate sites and social provision for travellers.
- develop a fair and transparent grant system for repairs in the private sector
- require, by law, every rented residential property to be fit for habitation, with severe and effective remedies against any landlord who fails to meet the standard
- bring ‘social landlords’ such as housing associations under democratic control and make them fully and publicly accountable
- build houses on brownfield sites, not on our diminishing country side
- explore land trust schemes in which land assets provide long-term income to support housing
- house people in some of the 870,000 houses lying empty in the UK and develop for housing (to appropriate standards) empty commercial property, which could provide 400,000 more homes

Transport

AGS aims

We need carbon-efficient public transport systems for both people and goods. Transport for people must be safe, comfortable and easily affordable. Unnecessary journeys, for goods and people, should be reduced. Transport systems should be integrated.

What is wrong

Many journeys by people and of goods are a waste of time and money. Currently most journeys generate too much carbon dioxide and other air pollution.

The present capitalist system is characterised by:

- raw materials, work in progress, finished goods, livestock and farm produce being unnecessarily moved backwards and forwards across countries and the wider world
- privatised railways receiving enormous public subsidies, far bigger than publicly owned British Rail ever got
- most road miles being covered by gas-guzzling, privately-owned cars and lorries

- tax concessions for the providers of private pensions will be removed, as will tax relief from contributions
- employers with fifty or more employees will be required to provide occupational pension schemes with defined index linked entitlements based on at least one third of final salary
- the demands of the National Pensioners Convention will be implemented

Social Security

AGS aims

A civilised society must provide for those of its people in need, so that they can live full lives in reasonable comfort.

What is wrong

The present capitalist system has been characterised by:

- those on benefits and old people often being ignored or made scapegoats
- the ever-increasing means-testing of benefits to divide people
- support services being cut and often means-tested or charged for
- increased insecurity for those without work or unable to work
- a punitive regime of “sanctions”, arbitrarily withdrawing benefits (for things like attending the funeral of your mother)
- the notorious bedroom tax, penalising people for having a spare room - even though there are no smaller houses available for them
- vicious government attacks on disabled people and the ill - even the terminally ill

AGS policies

- rely on a progressive tax system, where the rich and corporations pay much more, to provide sufficient money for welfare
- abolish means-testing of benefits, using the progressive tax system to pay for them
- All persons of working age should have entitlement to the same rate of social security benefits
- abolish the bedroom tax
- encourage people to accept that everyone is responsible for providing

for those with needs

- remove the artificial distinction between residential and nursing care so that all those needing care are entitled to it
- remove charges on elderly and disabled people for the medical and social services they need
- provide proper financial and practical support for people with disabilities
- protect benefits for single parents so as to safeguard their children
- restore the right to unemployment pay
- end punitive and unreasonable benefit sanctions

Housing

AGS aims

Housing is a basic need. Everyone should have access to decent, affordable, secure housing, whether rented or for sale.

What is wrong

- local councils have been stopped from building new homes while forced to sell off their existing houses, leading to a huge shortage; there is currently a waiting list of 1.7 million
- publicly owned housing has been privatised or part-privatised
- councils have been encouraged to knock down the homes of poorer people and replace them with private homes for the rich
- council tenants have too little say in what happens to their estates
- new private housing continues to be built on flood plains and much housing has poor energy efficiency
- House-building is too important to be left to the “market” to decide how much is built; recently there have been fewer houses built than at any time since the second world war
- Homelessness is a scandal in a civilised society

AGS policies

- reject all forms of privatisation (PFI, PPP, ALMO, etc), putting council housing under local democratic control, through local councils, with real involvement of tenants and workers
- stop and reverse the removal of public housing from elected local authorities
- have local authorities build good quality houses and flats, as much as possible by Direct Labour, with affordable rents, expanding the numbers, the quality and variety of public housing
- ensure all new housing, both public and private, conforms to the highest energy and water conservation standards
- Large house-building companies should be publicly owned and democratically operated
- refit all existing housing to maximise energy and water efficiency
- ensure that there will be direct and substantial representation of tenants associations on the housing committee and all local estate management committees

AGS policies

- stop privatising education
- bring the “academies” and “trust schools” back into local democratic ownership and control
- democratically run local education authorities that bring together councillors, staff, parents, trade unions and pupils
- every child has a right to a qualified teacher in every lesson
- truly comprehensive schools providing a rich, rounded, ecological and egalitarian curriculum for all
- provide secular education, entirely replacing ‘religious education’ with education on ethics, rationality and responsibility, including the nature of belief systems and the historical and cultural significance of beliefs
- bring all faith schools fully into the public system as secular schools
- meet all children’s needs by ensuring that both mainstream and special schools receive greatly increased funding
- end all state support for private schooling, including tax concessions and charitable status, recognising the power, privileges and social division that goes with it
- teachers and other school staff should receive far better wages, within a national pay framework; end attacks on teachers’ pensions
- schools and colleges on a ‘human scale’, within local communities, or as local to them communities as possible
- increase provision of free school transportation, including, where possible ‘walking buses’
- free, nutritious school food, prepared onsite, with the use of locally sourced organic produce where possible
- abolish tests such as SATS and establish alternative creative assessment practices
- free early years care and education for all from birth

Climate & Energy**AGS aims**

At long last most world leaders accept what scientists have known for ages: that there is global warming and that it is caused by human activity. Our power generation and industries, along with transport and farming, give out gases which cause changes in our climate. Global warming results in droughts, floods, hurricanes and rising sea levels as polar icecaps melt. We must stop global warming quickly if we are to survive.

The AGS aims for a society which uses far less energy and uses it more efficiently. We must get our energy from sources that are renewable and that produce far less greenhouse gas.

What is wrong

Poorer countries suffer the most from global warming. Much land is becoming too dry for crops, while islands and low lying land will be swamped, displacing hundreds of millions of people. The use of gas, oil and coal by rich and developing countries increases global warming. Rich countries like the UK pursue endless growth, and developing countries like China try to catch up with our lifestyle, so global warming cannot be stopped. The con-trick of “carbon trading” is being used to avoid genuine improvements and to pass the problem onto less developed nations.

Richer countries are already fighting for control of water and resources such as oil in order to survive. The illegal invasion of Iraq, the threats to Iran and Israel’s attempts to take complete control of water resources are examples of the use of power to control these resources.

Politicians are not looking to a solution to help everyone. Instead they are ducking and weaving to try to avoid taking action that affects their own countries. In the same way, rich corporations spend money on “greenwash” - pretending to protect the environment - instead of genuinely cutting the amounts of greenhouse gas, and other pollution, they produce. The rich seek control to ensure the poor carry the can.

Meanwhile rich countries and big corporations still pursue fossil energy. They try to exploit extreme forms of energy by drilling in the arctic and at incredible depths, and using dirty and barely viable tar sands. At home the government has been pushing fracking for shale gas despite the dire consequences. They are even changing the law to steal energy resources from under people’s feet.

AGS policies

The AGS appreciates that there is no easy solution, but will develop an integrated plan to address this crisis which will reduce Britain's greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2030:

- make energy utility companies democratically accountable by bringing them into public ownership
- prioritise reducing British energy use by increasing efficiency and reducing waste and unnecessary energy use
- move to a planned, joined up, and energy efficiently public transport system
- ensure new buildings use as little energy and water as possible
- put green walls on all new commercial buildings
- put in place a massive programme of insulation of existing buildings, creating large numbers of jobs
- invest heavily in research, development and use of renewable energy such as solar, wind and wave
- close existing nuclear power stations and build no more
- tax aircraft fuel like other fuel
- bring the water companies into public ownership
- develop effective urban drainage systems for our towns that will last
- stop the building of houses on flood plains
- ensure the planting of millions of trees

Internationally the AGS will:

- ensure Britain promotes ambitious international targets, as dictated by science, and meets and beats its targets under international agreements
- commit Britain to an annual reduction to zero in emission of greenhouse gases by 2030, enforced by law
- push for the USA, a big polluter, to stay in the Paris COP21 agreement
- accept that richer countries responsible for the current situation should help poorer countries hit by it
- support research into collecting gas currently flared at oil wells

- improve the facilities and care available for vulnerable people such as the elderly and those with disabilities, addictions or mental health problems
- abolish means tested charges for all long term nursing and the social care of the elderly
- invest in medical research which uses non-animal techniques
- stop all tax concessions and other state subsidies for private hospitals and private health insurance
- improve the pay and conditions of all NHS staff including ancillary staff such as cleaners
- move towards a universal salaried service including GPs, dentists and hospital doctors

Education

AGS aims

Education should prepare our children for life and help them fulfil themselves. It should be available throughout life to help us develop. The aim of our educational system should be the flourishing of individuals, communities, society, and ecosystems.

Progressive early years education should be available from birth for all who want it, fully funded by the State and staffed by well paid, motivated and qualified staff. Our school system should enable our children to become rounded human beings and active citizens with critical minds. Higher education should not just be about training for work but about development. Our schools and FE & HE institutions should foster a democratic and cooperative culture.

What is wrong

Education policy under Labour, ConDem and Tory governments has mortgaged our children's future to the private companies who now control our schools and run academies and "free" schools. It is clear that their aim is an entirely privately run school system, funded by our taxes. The comprehensive system is being replaced by selection.

A rigid curriculum has been imposed. Children and staff alike are subjected to test after meaningless test. The policy of both Labour and Tory governments has been that education is about training workers, not about developing people. A child's access to a broad and balanced curriculum now depends on their parents' ability to pay.

- there are high and increasing charges for prescriptions and tests that should be free
- many services, especially for the elderly, are means tested
- NHS hospitals and other trusts have been forced to become semi-private themselves and made to completely privatise large parts of their services
- the government encourages private health insurance and private clinics with tax breaks and subsidies, undermining the principle of free care for all
- there is no effective local control or monitoring of NHS services; no-one now knows who is responsible for delivery
- NHS staff, especially lower grades, remain underpaid, with their pensions under attack
- vast sums are being squandered on functions unrelated to direct patient care - such as over £13 billion on a non-functional IT system, and public relations and management consultants
- this fragmented, semi-privatised NHS now struggles to deliver even emergency care
- our personal health information is being input and kept electronically without safeguards for our privacy and without our consent

AGS policies

- repeal the ConDem's "Health & Social Care Act" and bring the whole of the Health Service back into public ownership and control; use the funds saved to pay for the beds and staff which have been cut during privatisation
- proper resources for basic needs like clean water and housing; plus the social care cut by the coalition
- better health education and disease prevention programmes
- stop wasting money
- aim to bring every local service up to the quality of the best
- increase investment to genuinely reduce waiting lists and eliminate the shambles in A&E
- make the NHS genuinely free to all at the point of need, including dentistry, and eye tests
- bring back free prescriptions for all
- establish democratic control over local NHS services, involving local people, patients and staff

Pollution & Conservation

AGS aims

Pollution threatens all of us - but our children are especially at risk. Our lives depend absolutely on our natural environment. We need soil, water, air, bacteria, fungi, plants and animals to survive. We need the "services" provided by our natural environment to provide clean water and food and to filter out our own waste products. The AGS would protect the environment that sustains us and conserve, not waste, our the earth's resources.

What is wrong

Capitalist companies damage our health and harm our environment in pursuit of endless, unlimited growth and short-term profit. That is the nature of capitalism. It treats our environment as something to be exploited for profit, not as the system that keeps us alive.

The air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat are all at risk. Globally the soil on which our crops depend is being eroded and the water that sustains them is being depleted. Already there are conflicts over water. Already the air in our cities is causing asthma in our children. Already the oceans are filled with plastic rubbish. We even dump our waste on poorer countries!

AGS policies

- monitor local air, water and other pollution levels and publicise detailed, local results
- close down all general waste incinerator plants - they produce dioxins which are lethal and poison our air
- close all nuclear power stations and build no more, instead investing in renewable energy sources
- divert our nuclear expertise to disposing of the mountain of radioactive waste we have already created, which will haunt us for 10,000 years and more
- reduce the need for travel (a major reason for greenhouse gas emission) by re-designing cities to minimise travel
- encourage people to work and holiday locally and to source materials of all descriptions as locally as possible;
- provide a good, reliable public transport service cheap or free

- reduce the pollution generated by transport of people and goods
- increase the recycling of waste and continue to require local authorities to meet these targets for recycling
- fund increased research into re-usability and the re-use of waste materials
- make suppliers cut unnecessary packaging by charging them the full cost of disposal of it
- ensure that suppliers of goods which are difficult to recycle will pay the cost of getting rid of these in an environmentally sound way, giving their customers full information
- require both public and private sectors to follow sound environmental policies in procurement, disposal and contracting
- require local authorities to bring green spaces, woods, parks, open spaces and school playing fields into single conservation plan in consultation with local people
- ensure easy and equal access to the countryside and strengthen the right to roam in the countryside
- stop sending our waste abroad

Food

AGS aims

We are used to comparatively cheap food. But the production of this cheap food has depended entirely on cheap energy to produce fertilisers and pesticides, mechanise farming and transport both inputs and produce.

A Green Socialist society would produce food more naturally and produce it - wherever possible - locally to those who eat it. It would provide healthier food, not foodstuffs you must wash to remove the poisons before you eat it. It would rely on safe methods of crop improvement, not genetic modification.

What is wrong

Governments and big industries seek to control food production because there is already a food shortage in the world and people are starving. As cheap oil disappears and we suffer the long term effects of profit-hungry industrial farming practices, shortages will worsen and prices will rise.

In addition:

- crops are increasingly being grown for biofuels not food
- deforestation continues to make way for soy crops to feed factory farmed animals

- return our key utilities to public ownership - many of our water, sewerage gas and electricity supplies were established by municipal socialists in the first place
- immediately bring back into public ownership the transport infrastructure, including the railways and bus network, with local democratic control of local services
- genuinely nationalise all non-mutual banks and insurance companies, launching a new People's Bank through a renewed Post Office network
- involve democratic local authorities, communities and the workforce in planning for the most appropriate forms of public ownership
- encourage the development of cooperatives, mutual societies and local authority activities as alternatives to capitalism
- support the Public Services Users Bill to make any privatisation accountable
- bring care of the elderly back into public ownership

Health

AGS aims

The National Health Service is one of Britain's finest achievements. The best example we have of pure Socialism in practice. It provides better care, and is more efficient, than any private health system in the world. The AGS strongly supports the principles of free treatment for all delivered by a publicly owned and publicly accountable health service. A free health service is vital for people's security.

A green socialist society would recognise that access to the basics of life, to health education and prevention of disease are all crucial for public health, and must stand alongside the treating of illness and injury as equal in importance.

What is wrong

The National Health Service is being stealthily but rapidly dismantled, without the consent of the people, in order to make profits for the few.

- the last Labour government broke up the National Health Service into "purchasers" and "providers", ready for privatisation
- The Tories are now actually privatising our NHS; it is being turned into just a brand name, under which private companies can profit from ill-health

Privatisation

AGS aims

Private firms take over public services for one reason only - to rake off more of our money into their pockets. Privatised services cost the tax payer more in the long term, whilst providing poorer quality services.

We believe that public services are best publicly owned, publicly accountable and publicly delivered.

What is wrong

The last Labour Government extended privatisation into the heart of our best loved public services – the NHS, schools and the Post Office. In fact, councils run by Labour, Tories, Liberal Democrats and the Green Party all privatised with enthusiasm. Now this Tory government aims to destroy public service entirely.

Yet businesses only run public services to make a profit for themselves - to trouser some of the money that should be spent on services.

- whether it is outright sell-off, PFI, or one of the so-called Public Private Partnership arrangements, privatisation always means cuts in our services to make profits for the private providers
- along with reduction in service levels, privatisation means cuts in workers' wages and deterioration of their conditions
- in the “busts” which always follow the capitalists' booms, private companies fall back on the taxpayer to bail them out - we pay for our services twice: once in direct subsidies, and again in emergency aid
- the ecological effects of privatisation are bad, as the profit motive comes before environmental protection, especially in times of recession
- international organisations, including the European Union, have been used to force countries to privatise

AGS policies

No to privatisation. Instead the AGS will:

- support public ownership as the only effective way of greening services and preparing our country for a sustainable future

- as global warming continues, more and more land will either be underwater or arid, leaving less available for food production
- bees are essential for the pollination of most food crops but are disappearing in the UK, the USA and other countries; the immediate causes appear to be pesticides or other human interference with nature.
- the economic crisis has increased the pressure on farmers to give in to supermarket bullying, pushing more and more of them into bankruptcy, eg dairy farmers
- multinational companies make huge profits from genetically modified (GM) crops which fail to deliver benefits
- The slimming industry makes enormous profits in rich countries while people go hungry in poor countries

AGS policies

- supporting local food production instead of unnecessary long distance transport of food
- expanding allotments for food to make them available to all who want them
- banning GM crops, including any field research, since this has already been proven to contaminate land and crops for many miles around
- encouraging and supporting the growth of organic farming
- requiring retailers to deal fairly with suppliers to ensure fair returns for this sustainably-produced food
- supporting immediate research into the problem of disappearing bees: lack of bees = lack of food!
- enforcing the highest standards of animal welfare
- removing the subsidies which encourage the wasteful over-production of some foods in Britain and reform the EU agricultural policy
- preventing the dumping of subsidised food on third world countries
- ensuring designated agricultural land is used for growing food and reducing food imports
- supporting food cooperatives, as on the continent, so that farmers can manage their own affairs
- encouraging farmers to grow nuts, beans and grains instead of animal farming
- put the study of food, nutrition and domestic science as was, back on school curriculum

Rural Sustainability

AGS aims

Climate change and the market are wrecking our countryside and destroying our communities. It's time for a rural revolution.

We should use our countryside in a way that feeds us, provides a decent living for those working there, provides leisure opportunities, and sustains the environment and the diversity of life that surrounds us.

What is wrong

Successive governments – Tory and Labour – have neglected the needs of rural people, particularly poor people in the countryside. Public services and transport cost too much and lack investment; local shops have given way to supermarkets miles away.

In the British countryside, communities are fading and, in some cases, dying as their lifelines – post offices, schools, pubs and village shops - are closed down. House prices way out of reach of local people are forcing them to move away. Many villages have become the preserve of the rich, weekend residents and seasonal holidaymakers, while the main local population is of elderly people.

Governments have also ignored the rapid changes in populations of native species of plants and animals as if this did not matter. Climate change, unsustainable farming practices, pollution and road traffic have wrought havoc among delicate ecosystems: communities of birds, insects and plants have been disrupted and many threatened species are hanging on by a thread.

AGS policies

- projects addressing the problems of global warming should be supported financially by local and central governments
- small scale rural generation of energy offers an opportunity to green and democratise our energy supply and should be supported
- big agri-business should be nationalised and financial encouragement given for start-up and subsidy of organic smallholdings and farming co-operatives

- supermarkets should pay out of their obscene profits for the damage they cause to town and village centres
- reintroduce rural Post Offices as centres of village life
- heavily subsidised, widely accessible rural public transport to encourage many out of their cars
- reduced maximum speed limits on rural roads to reduce damage and danger
- massive investment in rural public housing and affordable eco-homes to balance village communities and encourage the return of young people to the countryside
- second and third homes in the countryside should be heavily taxed to pay for local services
- heavy public subsidy of organic farming, sustainable forestry and rural industry to create jobs and revive countryside economies
- no GM crops
- no new road or runway building schemes, all of which threaten the long term stability and viability of threatened ecosystems
- small scale local finance, localised food distribution systems and even local economic trading systems can all contribute to keeping rural communities alive by containing the circulation of some products and services, and should be supported as part of a socialised economy