

Alliance for Green Socialism



GENERAL ELECTION MANIFESTO 2010

Britain – and the world – is going through a devastating financial and economic crisis, putting millions out of work and hitting pensions and savings. We face a number of environmental crises – particularly global warming – that will destroy our society. The two things are linked.

The response of our New Labour government has been 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, huge bonuses, new runways and more coal fired power stations.

Ordinary people 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.

New Labour has sold out its supporters and become just another Tory party. The big parties now offer voters no choice. It really makes no difference whether you vote Tory, LibDem or New Labour. Even the Green Party goes into coalition with Tories. Vote for any of these and you get a right-wing, privatising government that, in practice, fails to protect the environment, while allowing the BNP's influence to grow.

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 have 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. We need an economy based on fairness and cooperation, with common ownership of utilities and what are now ultra-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.

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General Election Manifesto 2010

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The *Alliance for Green Socialism* is part of a joint campaign in this general election. This **Socialist Green Unity Coalition** is being mounted with several parties including the Socialist Alliance, Socialist Party, Alliance for Workers Liberty, Socialist Unity and the United Socialist Party. We urge support for the candidates of these parties.

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OUR ECONOMY

Recession

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 problems – such as bad harvests or running out of a resource – should have significant economic effects.

Where economic problems do arise, the pain should 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
- growing shortages of key resources means we have long term problems we cannot solve by 'growth'
- environmental problems – especially global warming – increasingly 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 our economy into a bad recession
- the government has given vast amounts of our money to its friends in the banks, without much effect in the real world

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
- urgently address the effects of global warming including

OUR ECONOMY

- flooding, thus creating jobs and protecting our future
- protect public services and benefits from cuts
 - ensure the rich pay appropriate taxes
 - limit pay to top executives to a sensible 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
 - 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

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

Up until now, the capitalist economy has involved:

- 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 were positively harmful (eg GM food, weapons of mass destruction)

OUR ECONOMY

- huge amounts of advertising to persuade people to buy all these things they don't need
- high interest rates, normally, because of the need for profit
- 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:

- 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
- economic policy will support increase in well-being rather than growth in capitalist measures of production such as GDP
- the interests of the environment will come first, with large scale programmes of public works to increase sustainability and cut pollution, including greenhouse gases
- tax will be highly progressive – the rich will pay a much higher proportion of income than everyone else
- there is a tax on wealth, at a low percentage rate
- public expenditure will be paid for out of taxation, 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
- 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

Corporate Power

AGS aims

The global power of money must be countered at national and international levels. This will entail the creation of new democratically controlled institutions, to ensure that ordinary people's needs are put ahead of those of the global financial elite.

What is wrong

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

- 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
- 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

AGS policies

- 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

OUR ECONOMY

- 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 Islands, the Bahamas, and other Caribbean dependencies
- apply the simple principle that money earned and money spent in this country should be taxed in this country

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. 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
- many workers being paid less than the fair amount for their jobs
- 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
- the rich enjoying disposable incomes that are too high, at the expense of everyone else

OUR ECONOMY

- oppressive legislation, which prevents legitimate trade union activities
- toothless employment tribunals, 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 'New Labour'
- increase the minimum wage to half the adult male average wage
- strengthen the powers of employment tribunals to put wrongs right, for example by ordering 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
- jobs in renewable energy will be promoted
- there will be consultation with the trade unions and union membership and activities will be encouraged

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, at present face future 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 on accounting and tax and by the economic crisis
- millions have been pushed to invest in private pensions, to the benefit of the financial services fat cats more than themselves
- employed people being perpetually subject to the argument of the 'finite national cake', a constraint which employers never apply to themselves

AGS policies

- funding for pensions will be 'pay as you go' where current workers pay for the support of retired workers, not based 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 will be universal, independent of contributions

and not means tested

- the state pension will be re-linked to the higher of earnings and prices, restoring its true value to what it was before Thatcher
- 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

Welfare

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 unnecessary means-testing of benefits divides people
- support services are being cut and often means-tested or charged for
- increased insecurity for those without work or unable to work

AGS policies

- rely on a progressive tax system to provide sufficient money for welfare
- abolish all means-testing of benefits
- 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

OUR ECONOMY

- remove charges on elderly and disabled people for the medical and social services they need
- provide proper support for people with disabilities
- protect benefits for single parents to safeguard their children
- restore the right to unemployment pay

OUR ENVIRONMENT

Climate & Energy

AGS aims

At long last most world leaders accept 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 own climate and that of the world. 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 should get our energy from sources that are renewable and that produce far less greenhouse gas.

What is wrong

The hard facts are that poorer countries suffer the most from global warming. Much land will become too dry for crops, while low lying land will be swamped, displacing hundreds of millions of people. The use of gas and oil by rich and developing countries increases global warming. While rich countries such as the UK pursue endless growth, and developing countries like China try to catch up with our lifestyle, global warming cannot be stopped. The con-trick of 'Cap and Trade' is being used to avoid genuine improvements and to pass the problem onto such developing nations. The improvements identified should be carried out in any case.

While energy supplies are beginning to run out, the demand worldwide continues to rise. 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's and Israel's attempts to take complete control of water resources are examples of the use of power to control these resources.

Unfortunately, politicians are not looking to a solution in order to help all nations. 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.

AGS policies

The AGS appreciates that there is no easy solution, but will develop an integrated plan to address this crisis which will:

- prioritise reducing UK energy use by increasing efficiency and reducing waste and unnecessary energy use
- make energy utility companies democratically accountable by bringing them into public ownership
- move to a planned, joined up, and energy efficiently public transport system
- ensure new buildings use as little energy and water as possible
- 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

Internationally the AGS will:

- ensure Britain meets and beats its targets under the Kyoto agreement and successors
- commit Britain to an 80% reduction in emission of greenhouse gases by 2050, and further commit to an annual reduction of at least 2% each year from now until 2050, both to be enforced by law
- push for the USA, historically biggest polluter, to adopt Kyoto and subsequent international agreements
- support research into collecting gas currently wasted at oil wells

Pollution & Conservation

AGS aims

Pollution threatens all of us but our children are especially at risk. Our lives depend on our natural environment. We need soil, water, 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 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.

AGS policies

- monitor local air, water and other pollution levels and publicise the 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 pollution which transport generates
- reduce the need for travel (a major reason for greenhouse gas emission) by encouraging people to work and holiday locally and to source their raw materials of all descriptions as locally as possible
- increase the recycling of waste and continue to require local

OUR ENVIRONMENT

- authorities to meet these targets for recycling
- fund research into re-use of waste materials
 - encourage suppliers to cut unnecessary packaging by charging them the full cost of disposal
 - ensure that suppliers of goods which are difficult to recycle will pay the cost of getting rid of these in an environmentally sound way
 - require the public sector to follow green policies in procurement, disposal and contracting and make the private sector do likewise
 - require local authorities to bring green spaces, woods, parks, open spaces and school playing fields into single conservation plan in consultation with local people
 - expand allotments for food to make them available to all who want them
 - ensure equal access to the countryside
 - strengthen and support the right to roam in the countryside

Food

AGS aims

We are used to comparatively cheap food. But the production of cheap food depends 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 foodstuff 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:

OUR ENVIRONMENT

- crops are increasingly being grown for biofuels not food o deforestation continues to make way for soy crops to feed factory farmed animals
- 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. They are disappearing in the UK, the USA and other countries. The immediate causes are unclear
- the recession has increased the pressure on farmers to give in to supermarket buying and bullying, pushing more and more of them into bankruptcy
- multinational companies make huge profits from genetically modified (GM) crops which fail to deliver benefits

AGS policies

The AGS will tackle the food crisis by:

- supporting local food production instead of unnecessary long distance transport of food
- banning GM crops, including any field research, since this has already been proven to contaminate land and crops for 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 overproduction 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 coops, as on the continent, so that farmers can manage their own affairs

- encouraging farmers to grow nuts, beans and grains instead of animal farming

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 further 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 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

- 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

OUR ENVIRONMENT

- reintroduce Post Offices back into 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 environmental damage
- 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
- 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
- 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

OUR PUBLIC SERVICES

Privatisation

AGS aims

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

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

What is wrong

The New Labour Government has extended the Tory privatisation programme into the heart of our best loved public services – the NHS, schools and the Post Office. In fact, councils jointly or solely run by New Labour, Tories, Liberal Democrats and the Green Party all privatise with enthusiasm.

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, 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 created to force countries to privatise

AGS policies

No to privatisation. Instead the AGS will:

OUR PUBLIC SERVICES

- support public ownership as the only effective way of greening services and preparing our country for a sustainable future
- return our key utilities to public ownership – many of our water, 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
- finish the job the government has been forced to start and 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

Health

AGS aims

The National Health Service is one of Britain's finest achievements. It is better and 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 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. These are more important than treating illness once it arises – although, of course, we must do that too.

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 health service is being broken up into pieces that are then converted into independent profit centres prior to privatisation
- many services are actually privatised
- there are high and increasing charges for prescriptions and tests

OUR PUBLIC SERVICES

- that should be free
- many services, especially for the elderly, are means tested
 - NHS hospitals and other trusts are forced to privatise large parts of their services
 - the government encourages private health insurance and private clinics with tax concessions and subsidies, undermining the principle of free care for all
 - there is no effective local control or monitoring of NHS services
 - NHS staff, especially lower grades, remain underpaid
 - managerial and support structures have become grossly topheavy, with vast sums being squandered on functions unrelated to direct patient care – such as over £13 billion on a non-functional IT system, and public relations consultants

AGS policies

- bring all areas of the Health Service back into public ownership and use the funds saved to pay for the beds and staff which have been cut during privatisation
- refocus resources on basic needs like clean water and housing, together with health education and disease prevention programmes
- clear away all surplus and extraneous expenditure
- abolish the farce of supposed choice and bring every local service up to the quality of the best
- increase investment to genuinely reduce waiting lists
- 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
- 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 tax concessions and other state subsidies for private hospitals and private health insurance

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 New Labour has mortgaged our children's future to the private companies who now own our schools and run their flagship academies. It is clear that their aim is an entirely private school system. New Labour has undermined the comprehensive system, bringing in private schools and selection.

New Labour has imposed a rigid curriculum and subjected children and staff alike to test after meaningless test. The policy of New Labour and their Tory mentors is that education is just about training workers, not about developing people.

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 to strategically lead schools
- falling numbers of children should mean smaller class sizes, not

OUR PUBLIC SERVICES

school closures

- every child has a right to a teacher in every lesson – no staffing classes on the cheap with unqualified assistants
- fully 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
- 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
- bring all faith schools fully into the public system as secular schools
- teachers and other school staff should receive far better wages
- schools and colleges on a 'human scale', within or as local to communities as possible
- increased 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

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

OUR PUBLIC SERVICES

shortage

- 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 houses continue to be built on flood plains and with poor energy efficiency
- over one and a half million people waiting for council houses

AGS policies

- stop and reverse the removal of public housing from elected local authorities
- 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
- have local authorities build good quality houses and flats for 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
- refit all existing housing for 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
- 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 be made fully and publicly accountable
- build houses on brownfield sites, not on our diminishing countryside

- explore land trust schemes in which land assets provide long-term income to support housing
- house people in some of the 700,000 houses lying empty

Transport

AGS aims

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

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.

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
- dangerous privatised railways receiving enormous public subsidies
- most road miles being covered by gas-guzzling, privately-owned cars and lorries
- 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 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, the local production for local consumption, especially of food
- prohibit or discourage the unnecessary movement of materials, livestock and produce
- tax aviation fuel
- increase taxes on private vehicles and fuel
- make the publicly-owned systems much more carbon efficient
- make public transport free for pensioners
- strive for the best balance in investing in transport infrastructure
- 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
- encourage cycling and walking by improving cycle paths and pedestrianisation
- explore the potential of reopening railways closed by Beeching

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
- 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
- sport and the arts being downgraded or driven out of the school curriculum

AGS policies

- give schools more choice in what they teach and encourage them to provide opportunities for all children and young people to enjoy and fully appreciate sport and the arts, as both participants and 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 events can be seen on free-to-view television channels
- make sports governing bodies control the directors of sports clubs, to prevent them taking undue salaries or profits
- devolve arts funding to democratically run local authorities

OUR PUBLIC SERVICES

- ensure that local communities receive funding to run events that celebrate local culture
- 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

OUR PEOPLE & GOVERNMENT

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 cannot progress towards an ecological and socialist society in any other way.

What is wrong

- the lack of meaningful choice between the major parties makes a mockery of democracy – whoever you vote for you'll get 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

AGS policies

- 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
- 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'
- 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

OUR PEOPLE & GOVERNMENT

- 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
- restore the financial and practical independence of local authorities
- make all MPs subject to recall on the basis of a petition signed by an appropriate proportion of electors
- not increase state funding to political parties
- introduce fixed-term parliaments
- reform the parliamentary process for more democratic debate and to stop the prime minister being a dictator
- 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
- databases holding enormous amounts of private information,

OUR PEOPLE & GOVERNMENT

including DNA

- the introduction of mandatory ID cards
- 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

- scrap ID cards and 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

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.

What is wrong

- the government fostering a climate of fear – of terrorism and of other crime
- lack of accountability of police and secret services, leading to widespread distrust of them
- increased spending on prisons and other means of repression
- reducing individual rights under the law and condoning 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
- switch resources from prisons towards better education and

OUR PEOPLE & GOVERNMENT

- support for former offenders and support for the victims of crime
- wherever possible use non-custodial means, eg probation, to deal with offenders, as this reduces re-offending
- restore full legal aid, trial by jury and the presumption of innocence of defendants
- ban the use of torture and of “information” extracted by torture
- cut our world-record numbers of CCTV cameras 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, reducing the role of the criminal law
- repeal “sus” laws allowing arbitrary stop and search

Peace

AGS aims

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

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 them into illegal wars
- we support dictatorships and aggression
- 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

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
- immediate withdrawal of British troops from Afghanistan and demand withdrawal of all foreign troops
- 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 the huge new aircraft carriers and the Eurofighter, as well as Trident
- oppose plans to 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 has responsibilities
- 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
- 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 green socialist values, models and solutions throughout Europe and the world as a whole.

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

What is wrong

- our foreign policy being based on cynical calculations of self-interest
- the gap widening between rich and poor nations
- Britain being a poodle of the United States
- Britain exporting its flawed financial models, such as privatisation, to the detriment of other countries
- the European Union being undemocratic and favouring 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

OUR PEOPLE & GOVERNMENT

- uphold the rule of law in international affairs
- ensure fair access to scarce resources, including oil and water
- promote public and mutual forms of economic organisation
- fully support the reunification of Ireland as a single state under one government
- call for the lifting of the 'terrorist' designation of the PFLP

How do we pay for it?

This manifesto lays out a wide range of 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 be very 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.

The second point is a comparison. Gordon Brown has 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 New Labour has spent nearly a year's national turnover on the banks. Compared to that our proposals could be regarded as **quite modest**.

The third response is that we need to both **collect tax effectively** and have a properly progressive tax system. Large corporations and very rich individuals avoid paying tax. 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 tens of billions of pounds.

Making income tax truly progressive, so that people on very large incomes paid a much higher percentage, could yield billions. The introduction of even an extremely low rate of wealth tax could again yield tens of billions.

Finally, we must **stop wasting money** on expensive projects that are irrelevant or actually harmful. Cancelling Trident replacement would save seventy-six billion pounds. Dropping the two huge new aircraft carriers would save another four billion – and the same again from not buying the aircraft to put on them – plus the enormous cost of running them! Pulling out of Afghanistan would save three billion every year. Dropping ID cards would save six billion. And, of course, we all know the final costs of these wasteful projects will be double or triple the current estimates.

All this money, and lots more, could be diverted to the necessary things outlined in this manifesto.

Find out more:

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with the appropriate fee, or give to an AGS member.

Cheques payable to **Alliance for Green Socialism.**

I would like to join the **AGS** and enclose £25 / £15 / £5 / £3

(full income/low/negligible/student)

Name: _____

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Postcode: _____

Phone(s): _____

Email: _____

Trades Union(s): _____

Other political organisations of which member:

Interests, skills, experience, etc:

I enclose an additional donation of: _____

Signature:

Date:

What do you think?

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

How could this manifesto be improved?

Send us your suggestions, to the Freepost address below.

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