

Owen Jones' 9 point Agenda for Hope

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[Owen Jones has written what he calls a a nine point Agenda for Hope](#) in the Independent this morning on which he hopes those concerned for greater social justice can agree.

Agreement is often hard to secure, but I think this worth sharing, not least as I recognise a lot of it and have significant agreement with much of it:

- 1) *A statutory living wage, with immediate effect, for large businesses and the public sector, and phased in for small and medium businesses over a five-year Parliament. This would save billions spent on social security each year by reducing subsidies to low-paying bosses, as well as stimulating the economy, creating jobs because of higher demand, stopping pay being undercut by cheap labour, and tackling the scandal of most of Britain's poor being in work. An honest days' pay for an honest days' work would finally be enshrined in law.*
- 2) *Resolve the housing crisis by regulating private rents and lifting the cap on councils to let them build hundreds of thousands of houses and in doing so, create jobs, bring in rent revenues, stimulate the economy and reduce taxpayers' subsidies to landlords.*
- 3) *A 50 per cent tax on all earnings above £100,000 — or the top 2 per cent of earners — to fund an emergency jobs and training programme for young unemployed people, including the creation of a national scheme to insulate homes and businesses across Britain, dragging millions of out of fuel poverty, reducing fuel bills, and helping to save the environment. All such jobs will be paid the living wage, supported with paid apprenticeships rather than unpaid "workfare" schemes.*
- 4) *An all-out campaign to recoup the £25bn worth of tax avoided by the wealthiest each year, clamping down on all possible loopholes with a General Anti-Tax Avoidance Bill, as well as booting out the accountancy firms from the Treasury who help draw up tax laws, then advise their clients on how to get around them.*
- 5) *Publicly run, accountable local banks. Transform the bailed-out banks into regional*

public investment banks, with elected taxpayers' representatives sitting on boards to ensure they are accountable. Give the banks a specific mandate to help small businesses and encourage the green industries of the future in each region.

6) An industrial strategy to create the "green jobs" and renewable energy industries of the future. It would be focused on regions that have been damaged by deindustrialisation, creating secure, skilled, dignified jobs, and reducing unemployment and social security spending, based on an active state that intervenes in the economy, learning from the experiences of countries such as Germany.

7) Publicly owned rail and energy, democratically run by consumers and workers. As each rail franchise expires, bring them back into the public sector, with elected representatives of passengers and workers to sit on the new management boards, ending our fragmented, inefficient, expensive railway system. Build a publicly owned energy network by swapping shares in privately run companies for bonds, and again put elected consumers' representatives on the boards. Democratic public ownership instead of privatisation could be a model for public services like the NHS, too.

8) A new charter of workers' rights fit for the 21st century. End all zero-hour contracts, with new provisions for flexible working to help workers. Allow all unions access to workplaces so they can organise, levelling the playing field and giving them a chance to improve wages and living standards. Increase turnout and improve democratic legitimacy in union ballots by allowing workplace-based balloting and online voting.

9) A universal childcare system that would pay for itself as parents who are unable to work are able to do so, and which would take on the inequalities between richer and poorer children that begin from day one.

I suspect this might cause one or two comments. For me there is much in this that is commendable, ignoring the fact that the tax element appears to build on my work and parts of the plan look very much like the Green New Deal. It is this type of plan that Labour needs if it is to be taken seriously. At present Labour is a long way from it. I am glad there are those willing to say that because a plan for the majority in this country who have and are suffering badly from the current economic climate is vital if people are to be given back just what Owen puts at the heart of his agenda - hope.