



Speech by Lachlan Stuart Labour Women's Declaration #Expel Me Rally London, 9th March 2020

For most of the last four years I have worked in the Leader of the Opposition's Office. A day after I joined LOTO more than half the Shadow Cabinet resigned. It would be an understatement to say that those early days and months were chaotic.

And it isn't betraying any state secrets to suggest that the manifesto for the surprise General Election in June 2017 was prepared in a bit of a rush.

A colleague of mine prepared the section on women and equalities with Sarah Champion and her team, and it is clear to everyone that they drew heavily on the then-recently published Women and Equalities Select Committee report on transgender equality, with its recommendations for self-ID and other 'best practises'. Our internal opponents decided to provide us with enough rope to hang ourselves so, like everything else, these ideas just went through on the nod.

After the 2017 election, when we were all a bit surprised to keep our jobs, I set about looking at the impact of these policies on women in areas for which I held lead advisory responsibility. Hospital Wards. Prisons. Intimate Care Settings. Sports.

You can probably see where I'm going with this. I kept imagining my sister, my mother, in the settings I was considering. My sister submitting to a cervical smear test performed by someone with employment rights but also with stubble. My mother - a ward sister - managing the women's ward with someone who had the human right for their identity to be respected but who also happened to be an exhibitionist.

I secured authorisations to progress work in order to try and resolve these conflicts of rights. If doing that was transphobic hatred #ExpelMe.

As I explored the issues, we had a discussion within the party about All Women Shortlists. I let it be known I had some concerns. Suddenly, doors started closing on me. Stonewall refused to meet me. LGBT Labour cold shouldered me. Dawn Butler wouldn't take my calls. But the founders of A Woman's Place agreed to meet me for discussions. And that has been the pattern ever since.

Almost all those advocating primarily for gender identity interests have consistently refused to address the issues for which I was seeking practical resolutions.

And those practical resolutions had become critical. For me, personally. I had started to look at the clinical protocols for gender non conforming youth and was concerned by the explosion of referrals to gender identity clinics, especially of young girls. I found a trail of concerted, intense lobbying, harassment of medical staff, reactionary gender stereotyping, a woeful lack of evidence and, increasingly, the voices of detransitioners.

The risk of misdiagnosing young people struggling with an acceptance of their own sexual orientation was clear. The clinical pathways of affirmative care were untested, they seemed fraught with unassessed risks, they were shrouded in both co-morbidities and the fog of social pressures faced by all adolescents. And they seemed to be a one way street.

There was another narrative explanation but it wasn't one that Stonewall seemed concerned about. It seemed to me that young lesbians were becoming collateral damage in the battle for transgender acceptance. That's why we need an LGB Rights campaign. Stonewall isn't doing its job.

Back in the 1980s, when Stonewall arrived on the scene, we campaigned for our rights in very different ways. I joined the Labour Party around the time of the Miners' Strike, when Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners drew me in and educated me. We didn't have a platform unquestionably homophobic miners. We offered them our solidarity in their struggle. If you haven't yet seen the film *Pride*, please do so. Better still, dig out *Dancing in Dulais*, the original documentary, available on Vimeo.

We asked for rights which did not impinge on the rights of others.

I had been a campaign activist for around five years when Clause 28 was tabled and was among twenty or thirty people who gathered that night in Islington Town Hall. Linda Bellos was there, too. I offered to open the campaign office, provide a room and a desk and a phonenumber and a typewriter. Which I did, the next day.

A week later, after we'd got some small paragraphs in the nationals, we received our first cheque, which paid the police deposit for our first Stop the Clause protest march and rally. It came from a South Wales NUM branch. Dulais. And they just wrote, "In solidarity".

That's the opportunity that has been missed by conducting the campaign for trans rights in the way it has been conducted. The chance of strengthening progressive forces has been squandered. Pitting one oppressed group against another and shouting down any concerns as prejudiced bigotry. Well, if my record - if our records - are prejudiced bigotry, you know what to do. #ExpelUs

Today's campaign is not only conducted in secret groups behind closed doors. It is dishonest, and I'll end here, with an illustrative example of that.

Back in 2017 we included a commitment to age appropriate sex education. It's worth reading out exactly what we said, "We will make age-appropriate sex and relationship education a compulsory part of the curriculum so young people can learn about respectful relationships."
So young people can learn about respectful relationships.

To underline the point, that was in the manifesto section on violence against women and girls. Our policy was to empower young people, especially young girls. To help them identify inappropriate behaviours.

And what have LGBT Labour done with this policy commitment? They've turned it into an affirmative gender identity programme. They've produced a toolkit that doesn't empower lesbian and gay youth. It barely mentions them. It's all about recognising and affirming transgender identities among school children. You can check it out, it's on their website.

It suits their purpose to define us by the extremes of our associations.

But it suits our purpose to expose the harms in their agenda.

So, Labour leaders, if you want to take your cues from those who seek to undermine our policies, to depart from our procedures, from those who are anti-democratic, those who pursue an individualistic philosophy in place of collective actions. Go ahead. #ExpelMe

Because I'm standing in solidarity with WPUK and with LGB Alliance.