



## THE SILENCING OF WOMEN IN THE LABOUR PARTY

This dossier was initially prepared in October 2020 for our meeting with David Evans which he postponed. This shorter version was sent to him again in March 2021. We are still waiting for an alternative date. When that date is agreed, this paper will be brought up to date with additional recent evidence.

### Introduction

Labour Women's Declaration Working Group has prepared this briefing paper on behalf of our 6,000-plus signatories. Our campaign was established to protect both women's sex-based rights in the Labour Party, and free speech for women on policy issues which affect us.

The Labour Party manifesto of 2019 said: "Labour will put women at the heart of our government and programme" and that it would: "Ensure that the single-sex-based exemptions contained in the Equality Act 2010 are understood and fully enforced in service provision."

The manifesto also stated that: "Labour is committed to reforming the Gender Recognition Act 2004 to introduce self-declaration for transgender people, but we are not complacent about the culture shift required to make LGBT+ inclusivity a reality."

How do we reconcile these two sets of commitments? An ongoing discussion must be had here, to ensure that both transgender people's rights and women's rights are safeguarded. Keir Starmer has referred to the need for 'nuanced debate' on this issue - but being allowed any say at all is still not a reality for women in the Party. **Instead women who speak in favour of the commitment to the single sex-based exemptions are subject to silencing, accusations of 'transphobia', abuse from fellow party members and disciplinary action. We believe the party must commit to allowing open and respectful debate. It must also look at its own processes, where confusion around both policies and processes is making it easier for women's concerns to be sidelined.**

This paper covers four main areas:

#### 1 **Gender identity and the Labour Party**

The Labour Party has been subject to policy capture, not least via the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme. This has led to the Party incorrectly interpreting EA2010 single-sex exceptions and incorrectly replacing the word sex with gender. This has made it easier for legitimate debate to be shut down.

#### 2 **Conflation of sex and gender within Labour Party rule**

There are numerous examples where the rule book has omitted sex as a protected characteristic, and incorrectly replaced sex with 'gender' or 'gender identity'. This has facilitated the closing down of debate and led to women being unfairly accused of transphobia when they highlight the difference between sex and gender.

#### 3 **The experience of women in the Labour Party**

Many women at all levels of the Party face false accusations, harassment and disciplinary action when they attempt to discuss the conflict between gender ideology and women's sex-based rights. We document some of the many examples of how women have been targeted by activists and how their cases have not been dealt with even-handedly and consistently.

#### 4 **Conclusions**

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## 1. Gender Identity and the Labour Party

- 1.1. The Labour Party is one of hundreds of [Stonewall Diversity Champions](#). In 2015 Stonewall adopted a policy of advocacy for 'Trans' interests, and while they have since claimed to continue to advocate for LG&B interests, that is not the view of many lesbians, gay men and bi-sexuals - hence the recent establishment of the [LGB Alliance](#) and Lesbian Rights Alliance to speak up for them. The Stonewall '[Trans Umbrella](#)' encompasses a very wide definition of what comprises 'trans', including (but not limited to) 'transgender, cross dresser, non-binary, gender queer.' Stonewall has very strongly advocated for sex self-ID of trans identity to be enshrined in law without any consultation with its constituent groups. (Stonewall also argued strongly for the removal of the single sex exemptions from the Equality Act: <https://womansplaceuk.org/references-to-removal-of-single-sex-exemptions/>)
- 1.2. There is no definition of 'gender identity' in law, nor does the LP rule book define the term. This applies equally to the term 'trans'.
- 1.3. Gender identity is an amorphous term, which does not relate in any way to the material reality of biological sex. The inclusion of 'non-binary' within the 'trans umbrella' is somewhat contradictory since it inherently suggests that a binary exists. Most people are 'non-binary', ie they do not entirely embody one of the two gender stereotypes, though few 'identify' as such. Legislation to recognise a person's unscientific belief that they do not belong to either of the two (binary) biological sex categories would not be wise, although of course people who wish to present themselves however they choose in terms of gender stereotypes must be protected from abuse and discrimination.
- 1.4. Any questioning of or disagreement with gender identity ideology is being characterised as 'transphobia', so that women arguing for the retention of their existing legal rights to sex-based rights are subject to this accusation. This is not right or fair, and the Party should not be endorsing or supporting such accusations either explicitly or implicitly. These accusations are what have led to the intimidation and silencing of those, mainly women, but also some men, who advocate retaining the rights of women to single-sex spaces.

## 2. Conflation of sex and gender within Labour Party rules

### 2.1. Labour Party Rule Book - Requirements and Behaviour of Labour Party Members

- 2.1.1. There are many provisions within the rule book and the codes of conduct which relate to the behaviours expected of members, and these confer the right of Party members to express their views, to be heard, not to be harassed, and to disagree.
- 2.1.2. For example, the social media policy states:

*"A starting point for all our actions as members of a Party and a movement is to treat all people with dignity and respect. This applies to all our dealings with people, offline and online.*

*"Everyone should feel able to take part in discussion about our Party, country and world.*

*"We want to maximise this debate, including critical discussion, as long as it does not result in the exclusion of others. Abusing someone online is just as serious as doing so face to face.*

*"We stand against all forms of abuse and will take action against those who commit it."*

*And:*

*"It is perfectly possible to have vehement disagreements without descending into personal abuse, shaming people or exhibiting bullying behaviour.*

*"Forcefully made points and criticisms of the political views of others are totally legitimate, personal attacks are not. Debates amongst Party members should be*

*comradely, acknowledging that whatever our diverse views, we are one Party with shared goals.”*

2.1.3. Many women who have tried to debate women’s sex-based rights respectfully feel that these provisions have been ignored. Far from being allowed to debate, or even vehemently disagree, women have been shouted down and slurred as bigots.

## 2.2. The Labour Party Rule Book 2020, and the Equality Act 2010

2.2.1. The [Labour Party rule book 2020](#), as with preceding versions, does not clearly state the provisions of the Equality Act 2010, nor does it accurately cite the [nine protected characteristics](#) specified in section 4, which are:

*“age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation”.*

2.2.2. The protected characteristic ‘sex’ hardly appears in the Rule Book and in many instances ‘gender’ has been substituted as if it means the same thing, which of course, it does not.

2.2.3. There are two instances in the 2020 rule book where the term ‘gender identity’ is included, despite it not being a protected characteristic under the EA2020. This has apparently been the case since 2008, although no-one seems to have any knowledge of the process by which this occurred. How is gender identity defined? How can it be a positive thing for something to be included which is neither defined in law nor by the rule book itself?

2.2.4. The protected characteristics of marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief have been omitted from the rule book in some rules and the word ‘sex’ appears in the section on discipline in the 2020 version but is missing in many other rules. These issues were first raised in 2018 by a number of women Party members, but no response was ever received.

2.2.5. The Equality Act 2010 defines ‘sex’: girl and woman or boy and man. Gender is not a protected characteristic and the word ‘gender’ is not linked to the word ‘identity’ in the Act.

2.2.6. The Equality Act 2010 is a very significant piece of anti-discrimination legislation. It was initiated by the Labour Government headed by Gordon Brown. The Party was justifiably proud of the Bill, and it was ultimately enacted and implemented by the Tory/Lib Dem coalition in 2010. However, references in the rule book concerning non-discrimination are hugely inconsistent throughout the document.

2.2.7. By leaving numerous such inaccuracies in its documents, certainly where it is in power in local authorities, this can lead to a breach of the Public Sector Equality Duty to foster good relations between those defined in the protected characteristics.

## 3. The experience of women in the Labour Party

3.1. Women who speak in favour of the current sex-based exemptions struggle to be heard. Debates are shut down with accusations of transphobia. Those who advocate for self-declaration (sex self-ID) are allowed to make false accusations about gender critical women (including that we are funded by the extreme right) and to call for our expulsion from the Party.

3.2. Many of our supporters have come forward with worrying examples of how they have been targeted by gender ideology activists in the Party and have been subjected to malicious complaints which have then not been dealt with fairly. The pattern which has emerged shows a deliberate and hostile search for information across personal and social media sites (one of which is currently the subject of a police investigation in relation to hacking).

3.3. Two of our supporters, long-term members of the Party who had been empanelled (one a former NHS Commissioner), were disallowed from standing for election as councillors because of their defence of the right to speak on these issues. Two other women, in different areas, both long standing and well-respected councillors, have also been the target of such treatment and the subjects of complaints to the Party (and other bodies locally) in at-

tempts to destroy their standing in their communities and have them dismissed from membership of the Party.

- 3.4. This treatment extends to parliamentarians: Rosie Duffield MP and Jenny Marra MSP were harassed and bullied online in response to making statements of biological fact and supporting free speech (as discussed further in paragraph 3.16). It is the duty of our political representatives to listen, to enter into debate and to examine the implications for their constituents. Such harassment and targeted intimidation are both serious impediments to the execution of their duties and to the active participation of women in public life.
- 3.5. At no point has the issue of self-ID been debated at conference nor has any audit been conducted as to the impact on other equality areas, in particular on women, which (given the Party's commitment to audit all policy changes for their impact upon women) is extraordinary.
- 3.6. Those CLPs which have passed motions opposing sex self-ID, such as Rother Valley, Tottenham, Totnes and Cardiff Central, have done so in the face of abuse and intimidation. We are puzzled about what happens to such resolutions when they are sent to the Party nationally, and what is the process by which it is possible for members to have debates about such important issues.
- 3.7. Labour women meeting to discuss this issue have faced intimidation and harassment. In March 2020, the LWD organised the [‘#Expel Me’ Rally](#) in response to threats to women Party members. A violent noisy and intimidating protest was organised outside the building in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent any discussion from taking place. Smoke bombs were thrown, and as can be heard in the videos of the speeches, there was shouting throughout. Similarly, people attending a [Woman's Place UK meeting](#) in September 2019 organised during the last Party conference in Brighton were forced to walk past a baying crowd, including Party members and an MP's assistant, who then remained throughout the meeting shouting abuse and banging on windows, again in an attempt to intimidate and disrupt. The following day, speakers on the conference platform were allowed to condone the violent protest against WPUK and to smear those who had attended, without challenge. [WPUK's letter of complaint](#) to the Party has yet to receive a reply. Individual approaches by LWD working group members and supporters to their own MPs asking them to condemn the aggressive and violent nature of the protest against the meeting have also gone either largely unanswered or have received totally unsatisfactory replies that refuse to do so, despite the irrefutable evidence.
- 3.8. We are being told by some MPs that they dare not speak out because of the intense bullying of women who do express their views. The response to JK Rowling's very reasonable comments on this subject illustrates the problems being faced. [Rowling describes and analyses that in this article](#). The fact that some of our MPs are afraid to join this debate or express a view is an indictment of the Party in not making it clear that bullying of this kind will not be tolerated, and in failing to defend free speech and respectful debate. We are aware that MPs have been told not to speak in public about this issue, and that there is a view that the debate runs along factional left/right lines. We assert that there is no evidence for this view. Supporters of both sides in this debate range across the spectrum in terms of other policy positions.
- 3.9. We believe that the instances we will describe here under several headings are in contravention of the commitments cited above as to acceptable behaviour and practice in the Party. We emphasise that these examples are by no means exhaustive. They are only a sample of some instances where the details have been shared with us.
- 3.10. Disciplinary procedures - delays and lack of transparency in progressing appeals and complaints by Governance and Legal Unit**
  - 3.10.1. While these issues are not specific to the topics which are the subject of this briefing, we are aware of very long delays in processing both appeals and complaints, and a lack of clarity about timescales and the various disciplinary procedures.
  - 3.10.2. There are specified timescales imposed upon members for example, the requirement to respond to rejection as a Party member within 14 days of receiving such

notice. However there do not appear to be corresponding duties on the Party to then progress the appeal. Similar delays and lack of information appear to apply to complaints made, and to investigations.

### 3.11. Rejection as members

3.11.1. We are aware of several women, including the founder of [Counting Dead Women](#), who have been refused membership or permission to rejoin the Party for the surely absurd reason “hostility to gender identity”, when gender identity has no agreed meaning (because it is indefinable) and no standing in law. Others have been or are the subject of investigations by the Governance and Legal Unit.

3.11.2. One rejection letter stated:

*‘The information brought to our attention is that you have engaged in conduct on-line that may reasonably be seen to demonstrate hostility based on gender identity. Your application for membership of the Labour Party has therefore been rejected.’*

3.11.3. Another stated:

*‘The information relates to posts you made on social media, examples of which are included in this letter. Your comments are not in line with our values and your application for membership of the Labour Party has therefore been rejected’*

3.11.4. It is often the case that social media has been trawled, whether or not as a result of a complaint, and screenshots are sent with the rejection letter to substantiate the allegations of a breach of rules.

3.11.5. The rule book’s confusion about sex, gender and gender identity has meant any tweet that refers to female biology or the rights of women can be perceived by the Party as an attack on those for whom a belief in gender identity is significant.

### 3.12. Members put under investigation by the Party

3.12.1. A longstanding Party member, CLP secretary, branch chair and county councillor has recently received a “Formal NEC warning about [her] behaviour” which refers to claims that she had ‘engaged in conduct that may reasonably be seen to demonstrate hostility or prejudice based on gender reassignment or identity and undermines the Party’s ability to *campaign against equality*’ (our italics - an unfortunate error it has to be said).

3.12.2. This member, herself a lesbian and a retired senior social worker in charge of safeguarding for many years, was not offered a hearing to consider the allegations made but was merely invited to make statements in her defence, and these were rejected by GLU. The tweets in question referred to her concerns about children being pressured to transition by the Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) at the Tavistock Clinic. Recent revelations on [Newsnight](#) and evidence in the Keira Bell case, have vindicated the concerns she had expressed. We believe the Party needs to catch up in its approach to the demands of the gender ideology lobby, especially in relation to its pressure to lower the age of consent for children agreeing to life-changing medication, or risk ending up on the wrong side of a scandal which when exposed will far exceed, for example, the Savile revelations.

3.12.3. Other members have been put ‘under investigation’ in response to complaints which they themselves have made. We are aware of two members to whom this happened, and who left the Party in disgust as a result.

### 3.13. Lack of responses to complaints

3.13.1. Many women have written about the complaints they have made, through the official complaints process, to the Leader’s Office, (under both Jeremy Corbyn and Keir Starmer) and to the former general secretaries, McNicol and Formby. The most common response appears from our information to be no response. Despite the seriousness of the complaints, the distress of some of the women and the obvious

breaking of the rules by the bullies and accusers, women stated they received no answers.

*"I complained about ...in November 2019, no response."*

*"I complained about X who wrote about me on Twitter but have heard nothing."*

*"Haven't heard a thing about my complaint, I should chase it I think."*

*"The letter I sent following the vexatious complaint against me, still hasn't been answered."*

*"Several women in our group formally complained about accusations of 'transphobia' but none of them received any response."*

- 3.13.2. The replies that a few women received in response to their complaints reflect the very unsatisfactory wording of the rule book as regards the protected characteristics, and the apparent acceptance that women defending sex-based rights are 'transphobic'.
- 3.13.3. We have evidence that where reports have been made of hateful and misogynistic posts and tweets concerning this debate - where once again women are the principal targets, including the use of the slur TERF<sup>1</sup> - they have either had a response from GLU that there has been 'no breach of Labour Party rules' or simply received no response at all. A woman who complained about her LGBT+ Officer calling women TERFs was told by the GLU that the officer's use of the term TERF against women does not break Labour Party rules. This, despite a member of our own working group being told that use of the term 'trans cult' brought the Party into disrepute, on a members-only Party Facebook forum. The disparity of approach is clear for all to see.
- 3.13.4. Women are told there is no justification in complaining about being called a TERF (even though both Twitter and a court ruling [in the [Fair Cop](#) case] and Parliament's Women and Equalities Select Committee have defined it as such) or a bigot or transphobic. Women have been told that being shouted at in a meeting breaks no rules. An occasion when CLP officers did not bring a meeting to order, causing a woman to leave in acute distress, was not acknowledged as a justified complaint.

### 3.14. Targeting of women candidates for NEC election 2020

- 3.14.1. The election for NEC positions was overshadowed by a vicious campaign of intimidation and defamation directed towards women candidates who are believed to be supporters of the manifesto commitment to sex-based rights. The campaign led by some Labour Party members and Labour LGBT+ network across social media saw personal attacks on the women, calling into question their right to attend public meetings, their right to defend themselves and others from inaccurate accounts of their lives as activists and their right to freedom of expression. There were claims that Treasurer candidate Esther Giles was 'transphobic' and calls for her to be prevented from standing.
- 3.14.2. Edinburgh University Labour Students group (@EdLabStudents on Twitter) issued a statement objecting to the fact that NEC candidate Ann Henderson had attended a Women's Place webinar, discussing the proposed guidance on the sex question in the Census. Their statement included these words:

*"From our statement back in 2018, Woman's Place: '... is a group that has referred to trans youth as mutilated/sexual predators, encouraged educators to treat trans youth as mentally ill and repeatedly referred to trans women as violent men, 'parasites' and rapists.'"*
- 3.14.3. Woman's Place responded with [a detailed rebuttal of the claims](#) and the student group subsequently withdrew its statement. However, it said that it 'stood by its concerns' but was taking the statement down because of 'abuse, targeted harass-

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<sup>1</sup> Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminist

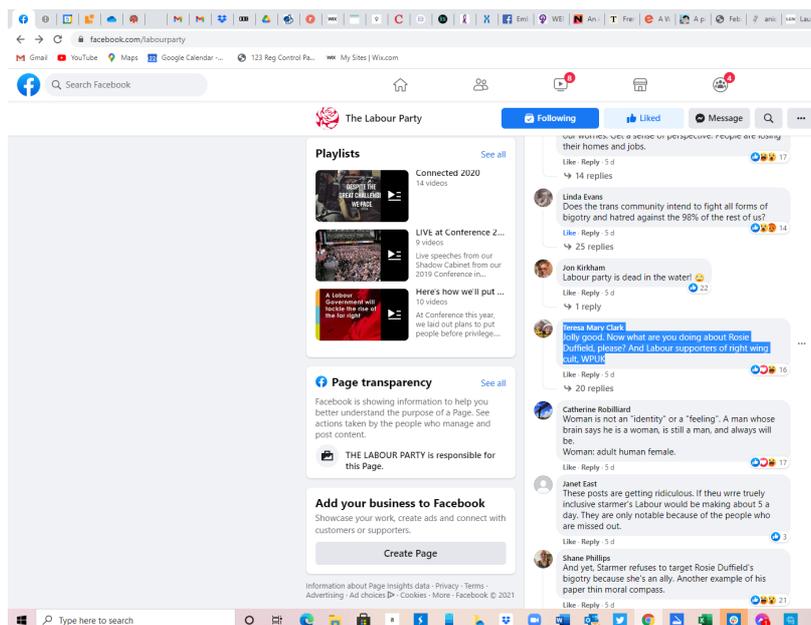
ment and threats'. We have seen no evidence of the 'abuse, targeted harassment and threats' to which they claim to have been subject. They were of course criticised and challenged for their unwarranted and untrue allegations.

3.14.4. The fact that Labour Party members can feel confident enough to think nothing will happen to them however abusive and defamatory they are demonstrates how discriminatory the Labour Party has become. Compare this to the extreme degree of self-censorship we are aware of amongst many women members who do not take part in local activities because of the fear of intimidation and harassment; is this what we want when we talk about the Party being inclusive and a welcoming place for all members?

3.14.5. Women whose applications for membership have been refused because of their social media posts know that their Twitter and Facebook accounts have been checked by Labour Party staff. They compare that to the behaviour of the members who have maligned the NEC candidates, yet clearly feel they are safe from any surveillance or sanction.

### 3.15. Attacks on Rosie Duffield MP and Jenny Marra MSP

3.15.1. Rosie Duffield MP liked a tweet by J K Rowling which said "individuals with a cervix" should be described as "women". She wrote in The Times '[It feels like Gilead where women aren't allowed to ask questions](#)'. Members of the Party - apparently representatives of the 'Labour Campaign for Trans Rights' - have called for her expulsion. **No one from the Party has defended her**, despite an ongoing campaign of vitriol and hatred only recently reignited apropos of nothing on Transgender Day of Remembrance on the Labour Party's own Facebook page. This is one snapshot of the type of comments bandied about Rosie (and WPUK).



3.15.2. MSP Jenny Marra received abuse from a range of Labour groups for her witty tweet asking Lanarkshire NHS Trust why they still offered sex identification at 16 weeks gestation given their new trans policy which used the words sex assigned at birth. Many women submitted complaints to the Party about this abuse towards both Rosie Duffield and Jenny Marra.

### 3.16. In Branches, CLPs and other Party environments

3.16.1. At CLP and Branch level there is often an intolerable atmosphere of fear and hostility, with many unable even to discuss the issues. We have examples of women's officers driven out of their posts for suggesting the discussion of women's sex-based rights. The social media pile-ons, and the doxxing and targeting of anyone who does

not adhere to the Stonewall gender ideology orthodoxy have made many too frightened to even ask questions.

3.16.2. Women have written of their experiences when attending branch and CLP meetings where they expected open and respectful debates about the many aspects of protecting women's rights alongside supporting the rights of the LGBT community. The rules of the Labour Party cited above would suggest the women's expectations were quite reasonable.

3.16.3. A woman member of a London CLP who attempted to discuss the threat to the accurate collection of data from the 2021 Census because the basic question "what sex are you?" might be dropped was met with hostility from some members who told her she was transphobic. The woman was prevented from debating this issue and when she posted the relevant academic article from a respected statistician and Party member, Professor Alice Sullivan, in the branch Facebook page the page was closed down. The woman wrote:

*"I've been active in the Labour Party for about five years, helping with numerous campaigns...but since this issue I have been ignored, shut down, ostracised is probably the best word"*.

3.16.4. Similarly, a woman in the East Midlands and one in the North East both posted the article from Prof Sullivan on sex in the census on their Facebook timelines and both were criticised by Party members and accused of 'transphobia'. The article is a factual account of how and why data is collected from the Census and has been since 1801. It does not enter into a debate about transgender ideology but advocates that the guidance on the sex question should not invite respondents to answer in terms of their gender identity. (There is no opposition to the **additional** question on gender identity.)

3.16.5. The London woman's description of being attacked by Party members was echoed by a woman from Manchester who wrote of a CLP discussion on LGBT teaching in schools where she spoke in support of the manifesto commitment to 'ensure all teachers receive initial and ongoing training on issues students face and how to address them'. When saying that some teachers felt ill-equipped to address these issues, and so outsourced the lessons to lobby groups, such as Stonewall or Mermaids, she was verbally attacked by several members who called her 'transphobic'. The chair asked her to continue, but she was:

*"Heckled, interrupted and accused of transphobia by a number of men in the room. Unsurprisingly I was left feeling quite shaken...This form of bullying is shutting down a woman's point of view and against Party rules which states 'Harassment or intimidation of any member is unacceptable'."*

3.16.6. The men who attacked the Manchester woman continued their intimidation on social media: although she was not named, the posts referred to her as transphobic. This is not unusual; the woman from London was similarly denounced as were many other women, all of which is clearly contrary to the policy cited above about it being possible to have vehement disagreements. Given that the DfE has now revised guidance to schools about RSE and has in effect banned schools from promoting the narrative that children can be born in the wrong body, these women's concerns have been vindicated. The Party needs to catch up.

3.16.7. These experiences are repeated across the UK including in Scotland and in Wales. Women are called transphobic and TERFs by other members, often officers of the Branch or CLP, when the subject of women's rights is raised. Women have complained about the unfairness of speakers promoting transgender ideology being invited to meetings when any request for a speaker who would address women's issues is not permitted. There is evidence that speakers who would represent the views of women who support the Labour Women's Declaration have been denied a platform in CLPs in the north east, London and the east midlands. In the east midlands, one of our working group members was told by a local elected officer that the regional office had been contacted and a staff member there had informed him

that Labour Women's Declaration is deemed to be a transphobic hate group by the Party.

- 3.16.8. Another example comes from a Yorkshire CLP which had invited a speaker from Labour Women's Declaration to address a Zoom meeting. This followed a similar event that had welcomed a speaker from a local LGBT group who had promoted an extreme transgender ideology position and slurred those of us campaigning in support of the manifesto commitment on sex-based rights. Several women members from the CLP suggested a representative of LWD be invited to a zoom meeting so all members had the opportunity to hear another point of view. At first it looked as though this request would be granted: the political education officer emailed LWD and booked them to speak. But someone complained that LWD was a well-known 'anti trans' group, citing a video link to a talk from an entirely unconnected group, and the invitation was withdrawn. Two women members from the CLP Executive have since resigned from their officer roles in protest at the silencing of LWD. We were never given the opportunity to refute the false accusation that we are 'anti trans'.
- 3.16.9. More recent examples of no-platforming include former candidate for the Labour Treasurer post, Esther Giles, who was persuaded to step down from a "Labour Lock-out" free speech event and Kiri Tunks, trade unionist and longstanding Labour member, who was disinvited from a Labour branch event to mark International Women's Day on challenging sexism. The ward withdrew its invitation after some members falsely claimed that as a founder of Woman's Place UK she was allied with a 'hate group'.
- 3.16.10. The descriptions from many women of being denounced in meetings by other members, sometimes supported by the chairs of meetings and sometimes not, are very disturbing, as are the descriptions of others in the meeting rooms sitting in silence as if afraid to speak out.
- 3.16.11. Women do not fare any better when they put themselves forward as candidates for local government elections. The rule book refers to "encouraging a greater level of representation and participation of groups of people in our society who are currently under-represented. Women are one of the under-represented groups". Although the rule itself refers to 'gender' it is clear the intention of this rule is to allow for the opening up of panels and selection processes. However, reports from women in the south east and south west regions do not describe a widening of selection processes, but of arbitrary barring of women who are perceived as supporting women's sex-based rights.

3.16.12. *A woman from the south east said;*

*"I was one of two people turned down as a council candidate by my local Party because people complain about us expressing our opinions on sex and gender. A third candidate backed out because she was fed up of being slandered. By complying with bullies and gossips, you silence the quiet people, you silence women".*

### 3.17. In Unofficial Labour Party Forum Facebook Groups

- 3.17.1. There are a number of Facebook groups with names which are a variation on 'Labour Party Forum'. We recognise of course that these groups are unofficial. Many of us have had comments deleted and been banned from such groups because we defend women's sex-based rights. Worse, many posts and links relating to this topic are not published by the moderators of these groups, thereby debate is censored from the off. As we understand it, the administrators of these groups are Labour Party members and as such should surely be subject to the provisions of the rule book and the codes of conduct.

## 4. Conclusions

- 4.1. The Party has not been even-handed in its treatment of women who defend our single-sex rights under the EA 2010, and those who make accusations against us.

- 4.2. The experiences of Labour women in meetings, selection processes and on social media demonstrate that misquoting the Equality Act 2010, in particular the nine protected characteristics, has increased the conflict between women who are being silenced and those who are quick to call women transphobic and bigots. The conflict is built into the rules. Harassment on the basis of **gender** has no meaning. **Gender is not the same as sex** and by omitting sex from the majority of the rules women are lost from view.
- 4.3. By not speaking out against all the experiences we have set out, we believe that the leading figures in the Party are giving licence to misogyny and intimidation. We do not believe that this is in accordance with the spirit and values of the Party, nor in its interests. Not only does this behaviour have a chilling effect on an essential debate, but many women are leaving the Party as a result.
- 4.4. We ask you to listen to the experiences of our supporters, most of whom are grassroots members. The Party should make it clear that engaging in respectful debate is not an appropriate reason for disciplinary action or membership termination/rejection. It is a right that all Party members have and this is amply spelled out in many clauses of the Party's rule book and the codes of conduct.
- 4.5. Disagreement with a particular view, or the assertion of biological fact does not constitute 'hate crime' or discrimination. It is not difficult to distinguish between disagreement, debate and abuse and it is imperative that the Party does so.
- 4.6. We have set out how the misuse of gender identity leads to membership applications being judged on social media activity that has little to do with demonstrating a commitment to the principles of the Labour Party and everything to do with the inability of the Labour Party to hold an intelligent and respectful debate on women's rights. The Party must decide whether belief in the concept of gender identity is a requirement to be a member. Respecting others who hold that particular belief or faith is not at issue for us. Of course, we agree that those who believe in it, and those who believe that, for example, trans women are literally women, should be able to live their lives as they wish, have free speech and be protected from discrimination.
- 4.7. But is the Party prepared to insist that those of us who do not hold to that belief system should be granted the same respect and rights?
- 4.8. The Party must adopt a fair and evidence-based approach. Labour's commitment to free speech and to the rights of women, founding principles of our Party, should be enshrined in the structures and processes of the Party. **Above all, we need a strong defence of our right to speak and to be free from intimidation and bullying.**
- 4.9. The attacks on women come from Labour Party members who are MPs, councillors, elected officers of CLPs and affiliated groups, grassroots members of the Party and trade unions.
- 4.10. Most of the hundreds of comments on our [Labour Women's Declaration](#) page record the disillusionment of women members with the political Party that many have supported for decades but which now refuses to listen to concerns that women raise about our sex-based rights.
- 4.11. Women members work hard for the Party whether as phone bankers, leafletters, canvassers, organisers, councillors, branch and CLP officers or fundraisers. Yet women are being silenced, bullied and intimidated and are leaving the Labour Party. This exodus is apparently unseen by the leadership, the PLP or by Head Office staff - but unless there is an acknowledgement that a debate must be held, the exodus will be felt in the ballot box in 2024.
- 4.12. The Labour Party rule book is full of good intentions but for as long as it misuses the Equality Act 2010 by leaving out sex from the protected characteristics and inserts other invented words and concepts, women will continue to suffer discrimination, and to be at risk of malicious complaints and unfair exclusion.
- 4.13. Those who accuse and traduce us are NEVER challenged by the Party or asked to provide evidence - and it is we women who are being silenced, abused and disciplined.

**Labour Women's Declaration Working Group, 6 April 2021**

Lynn Alderson, Totnes & South Hams CLP Chair  
Cllr Carol Angharad, Mid Derbyshire, Branch Chair, former CLP Sec  
Jane Ayres, High Peak CLP  
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