

Election Voices

With poll fever mounting *Marxism Today* asked a highly 'unscientific' sample from across the political spectrum: 'What are your feelings about the forthcoming general election?'



I look forward to a constructive working relationship with a new Labour government. But I am concerned that local democracy will be at an end with a third term of a Conservative government.

Merle Amory (leader, Brent council)

In the next election I shall be voting for the Green Party for the second time.

No other party seems to have grasped the simple fact that we are living in the post-industrial era. No other party has begun to think of man in relation to this planet. All other parties base their plans on constant industrial expansion. After reading *The Limits to Growth*, a report published by the Club of Rome in the early 70s, it becomes clear that industrial society will gradually come to an end over the next 70 years.

The Greens are the only party who seem to be aware of this. All the other parties are buried, like dinosaurs, in historical rock of their own making.

Raymond Briggs (writer and cartoonist)

I feel that Labour has got to get in. I just wish that politics was different so that in those constituencies where the Conservatives will get in because they get more than Labour, or more than the SDP/Liberal Alliance, that the Labour Party would make an agreement with the Alliance so that we would get the right sort of people in the House. But I know they won't. I just feel that politics, like all the other institutions in this country that people have to deal with, doesn't represent what we need today. I fear that at the end of the day the Conservatives will get in for another term. And if they do I fear that we will have no health service by the end of it.

Wendy Savage (consultant)

This is the most interesting election since the 60s. The Thatcher government has shown, to an alarming extent, how parliament can influence the everyday lives of the people of this country. As a result more and more of us are fighting for fundamental freedoms - of public assembly, of the press, the jury system - that predate even the Victorian period. What is more, here in Manchester, we are aware that social divisions created by Thatcher are being policed by a man whose claim to be guided by the hand of providence echoes the Cromwellian era. We have to get the Tories out!

Keith Sutton (editor, *News on Sunday*)

I will be obeying my own class instincts and interests and will vote Conservative in the forthcoming election. My only anxiety is a number of people in the south of England who don't perceive their own class interests and will be voting Alliance.

Auberon Waugh (journalist)

The absolute priority is that Mrs Thatcher should be defeated, preferably by the Labour Party.

Eric Hobsbawm (historian)

I look forward to the election of a Labour government which will put real weight behind Britain's role in disarmament.

Denis Healey (shadow foreign secretary)



My message to the two Davids is: 'Do us a favour - get a divorce.' They should go solo. Poor David Steel is coming across as Stan Laurel to Dr Owen's Oliver Hardy, put down whenever he speaks out of turn. We are left wondering what it is that unites this Alliance other than their quest for power. I have a new scenario. Should the next election result in a hung parliament, the SDP will support the Tories, while their Liberal allies side with Labour. The bloc commanding the largest number of seats will then form the government.

Derek Jameson (broadcaster)

I would like to see a larger proportion of younger people and women elected to parliament. I would hope that one of the first things they would do would be to look seriously at the problem of proportional representation.

Professor Peacock (chair, Peacock committee on broadcasting)

I've got the whole weight of Thatcherite oppression on my shoulders so I can't comment right now.

Duncan Campbell (investigative journalist)

There is absolutely no truth at all in the vicious rumour that Rod Hackney will be standing in the next election.

Rod Hackney (architect)



All elections are a complete and utter waste of time. All politicians are too bloody old and out. I'm not going to vote and it's a waste of petrol going along there. I've been battling against stupidity all my life. If you lived in Russia you'd come up against the KGB. If you lived in the free society USA ... well they elected an old fool, didn't they.

Tony Blackburn (disc jockey)

Doubtless Mrs Thatcher and the Saatchis will again flex their marketing muscles to whip in wayward, wet and wobbly Tories by painting Labour a sinister shade of scarlet. This time their smears may end in tears, because the electorate's discovered its own amazing magic ingredient: tactical voting. They've realised that now there are three brands to choose from, they too can flex their muscles. So watch out for a new improved general election, with added voting power (sounds a little like a boring old product called democracy, which hasn't been around for years).

Winston Fletcher (advertising executive)

I am writing this in the heat of a by-election campaign to which the newspapers are sending overpaid 'foot in door' reporters to check out trivia like my age, while I talk away about jobs, health, housing, education etc. It's bringing home to me the importance of 'setting the agenda'. Who will decide what the general election will be about? If we're not careful, it will be the multinational firms in control of the newspaper industry. We need to be quite determined that the issues which affect the lives of ordinary people stay firmly in the centre of political debate.

Deirdre Wood (Labour candidate, Greenwich)

The Conservatives are going to win. This depresses me.

Salman Rushdie (writer)

I would say that tactical voting, if you can get it right, is the only sensible course.

Bernard Williams (philosopher)

The next election could be the most interesting since the war because it could trigger a period of new alliances and realignments. The odds must be heavily against an outright Labour victory. Another Conservative win could throw the Labour Party into turmoil and could be the beginning of the end of Labour's 60 year reign as the second big party. A balanced parliament could produce any number of outcomes but certainly would give parliament back to backbenchers. A refreshing change! Some of us will be looking for radical coalitions to achieve real redistribution of wealth and power. We reckon there is all to play for.

Simon Hughes (Liberal MP)

The Tories have already served notice that the policies of progressive Labour councils will be a major target in their election campaign. Nevertheless, I expect that these Tory-orchestrated attacks will backfire because our policies have been aimed at the poor - the working class, black and minority ethnic people, women, lesbians and gays - all of whom make up a majority of the population. After enduring massive unemployment, cuts in the health service and welfare benefits (a miserable £5 extra for the elderly this winter), assaults upon hard-won trade union rights etc, I feel sure that a majority of the electorate will reject this latest calculated insult to their intelligence. An elected Labour government committed to socialist policies, including full employment, economic regeneration and equal opportunities policies for all, can then get on with the serious task ahead of rebuilding the shattered economy and creating a just, caring society.

Bernie Grant (leader, Haringey council)

Another five years of a Thatcher government will bring the final death nail to the manufacturing industry in Scotland.

Jimmy Airlie (national organiser AUEW)



I am terrified by the prospect of a general election at this stage. It's taken a lot to make me wish that Foot was back. But I shouldn't say that really. One of the best things about the Tories is the way they fall back into rank even though some of them are very disappointed with Thatcher. I suspect that's because they all make so much money out of being Tories. Hope for the

best, expect the worst. We are turning British politics into American politics by ignoring class interests. Kinnock doesn't seem to be aware of them and the SDP is a step in that direction too, but that's another story.

Angela Carter (writer)

My feeling about the general election is, I wish it would hurry up and people would stop talking about it. I mean it hasn't even been announced yet. I've never seen a general election that was so anxiously awaited.

Germaine Greer (writer)



I hope that as many members of this democracy are as involved as possible and that it doesn't get marginalised into a media event.

Tom Watt (*Eastenders*)

My politics are now a private matter but my political past is a matter of public record. My views have not changed and I still stand by the principles and values that I always have adhered to. I am looking to a general election which will create and maintain employment which I regard as the most important issue, particularly coming as I do from a working-class background which has known the horrors, deprivation and the indignity of unemployment, and the experience of the North-West and in particular Merseyside.

I am looking forward to an outcome that gives the greatest opportunity to the largest number of people to participate in the lives of their community. I want to see people at work for themselves and for the community. People at work is the way of creating wealth, and from that all else will follow. All the other needs are preceded by the need to get people to work.

Robert Kilroy-Silk (tv presenter)

I hope Labour wins.

Steve Bell (cartoonist)

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