

What Lesbians need from the Labour Manifesto.

Thanks Tonia. It's a privilege to be part of this conversation. But we all need to be - so let's have some audience participation.

I invite you to relax and close your eyes. Bring to mind your perfect partner. Your heart's desire. Hold that image. Keep it to yourself. What turns you on is after all an entirely private matter.

Now imagine someone who you couldn't possibly be physically attracted to because of their sex.

Imagine being told that you need to work on broadening your sexual preference to be all-encompassing.

Open your eyes. Conversion therapy, right?

As a Lesbian - if you fail to broaden up, you are branded as a sexual racist -by the CEO of the organisation set up originally to advocate for those who share your sexual orientation.

In fact the name you have used for centuries to describe yourself is now being used to mean something entirely different.

That is where Lesbians are at. Hence Lesbian Labour. *(Hold up leaflet)*

Now if you are secure and can hold your own – like Anne Lister in 1821 – you may respond eloquently with:

“I love and only love the fairer sex and thus beloved by them in turn, my heart revolts from any love but theirs.”

You may be affronted, dismiss it all as nonsense or, god forbid, be offended – but you will carry on loving who you love. Regardless.

But imagine you are a young gender-non-conforming teenage girl struggling through puberty desperate to escape the hyper-sexualisation and hyper-feminisation all around you. Perhaps you identify as non-binary – phew, a breathing space. Or perhaps you reject the mighty phallus and declare that you are a Lesbian.

Off you go to a shiny fun well-funded queer or LGBTWTF youth group for those who are different. Home at last. You say you fancy girls. They ask you “are you sure you're not actually a boy trapped in a girl's body? Normal people hook up with the opposite sex!".

Judging by the number of Lesbians transitioning this clearly has an impact. In Iran the normalising of homosexuals through gender reassignment is state funded standard practice.

If you stick to your guns, you get the “sexual racist” treatment. Pressured to accept male bodies into your dating pool and told you are transphobic if you don’t. Corrective rape. Lesbophobia. The modern day version of “you’re not a Lesbian – all you need is a good shag”

To those young women we say,

A Lesbian is an exclusively same-sex-attracted human female. We don’t do dick.

And we are protected under the Equality Act on the basis of sexual orientation.

The fact is, gender identity and sexual orientation are two completely separate things. They have never been comfortable bedfellows. Forced teaming isn’t working.

So please stop using a meaningless ever-expanding acronym which just allows you to tick-box your way through diversity requirements. Be a good ally – address each group by name and learn about our individual realities.

Now that’s the reality for Lesbians – has Labour got the answer?

Is Labour losing women? Yes. Is Labour losing Lesbians? Double yes.

What does Labour need to do to get the Lesbian vote? Listen and consult.

Then write a decent manifesto which gets us elected.

Consult directly - not through LGBT+ Labour who refuse to meet with us, because, I quote, “Your public priorities reflect the priorities of only a negligible proportion of Lesbians in Labour”. Since same-sex attracted Lesbians are never included in LGBT+ group consultations, I can see why it looks that way to them.

We all have to pretend we are one big happy ever-expanding inclusive rainbow family. Well, we’re not.

We have the right to organise autonomously as Lesbians in separate spaces in the time-honoured Labour movement tradition of caucuses. Spending time with others defining your priorities is not only essential for

good mental health but for overcoming power dynamics which exist between different groups.

There is nothing wrong with organising around any other commonality either.

LGB groups or Labour Trans Equality.

Caucuses are by their very nature exclusive – and that's OK.

But Lesbian-only spaces are fast disappearing – taken over by male “lesbians”.

You cannot surgically remove male advantage, entitlement or privilege. Hormones may decrease testosterone levels but they do not reduce learned behaviour from lived experience growing up as a man in a man's world.

So, no thank you Stonewall and co for rewriting our sexual boundaries.

We will keep them. Lesbians are, I repeat, exclusively same-sex attracted adult human females.

So say the negligible proportion of Lesbians in the ever-expanding secret safe Lesbian networks, who I asked what we need from a Labour manifesto.

I will post all their answers on Lesbian Labour, but some highlights for now

Val in Buckingham says: Policy, Laws and manifestos are made up of words. Words matter. Use the correct ones. Define your terms.

Carol in Derby asks for an absolute commitment to maintaining sex not gender in all definitions, especially the rule book, in order to ensure that sexual orientation remains a protected characteristic.

Hannah in Lancaster asks: Where is the impact assessment on how self-ID would affect Lesbians?

Be honest that a woman is ONLY an adult human female and that men are not and cannot be lesbians! writes Julie in Leeds

No Lesbian is born with a penis, clarifies Amy in Norwich.

Jill in Todmorden wants to see an end to revisionism and the queering of Lesbian and Gay history. Stop the transing of Lesbians.

Chloe in London wants an acknowledgement that exclusive same-sex attraction is NOT transphobic, and that to suggest otherwise is in fact incredibly homophobic.

Mary in Cornwall suggests the party stop shunning Lesbian Labour and LGB Alliance.

Lynne in Bristol was one of several respondents wanting a firm commitment to getting gender ideology out of schools.

Kate in London asks when Labour will become progressive again in supporting LGB rights and stop the regressive messaging that Lesbians must accept men.

She implores: start showing you care about all the children and young people - likely to grow up LGB - whose lives are being ruined by a cruel and nonsensical ideology. Listen to Hilary Cass.

In Scotland, Sally wants the right to be heard for any Lesbian who considers herself same-sex rather than same-gender attracted.

Whilst Kate advises: Scottish Labour would gain massive votes by being reasonable about sex-based rights.

Meanwhile in Wales – Sarah from Swansea writes that

Mark Drakeford, arguably the most powerful elected Labour politician in the UK, has failed to consult with Lesbians, making a farce of promises to "honour and listen to every voice".

Rosa, a negligible Lesbian from Malta, where self-ID is law, took the trouble to send this heartfelt warning:

We can no longer have lesbian-only spaces. Young lesbians who are not feminine are being brainwashed & told they're men, with the unnecessary hormones and surgery that comes with it. Those who regret it are too scared to speak. Tell them how young lesbians no longer know what a lesbian is because they are taught to include men. Tell them that this is lesbian erasure. It's conversion therapy. Conform to stereotypes or you will be made to. Please do not do the same in the UK.

Last night I had this message from her:

“Thankyou for doing this. Obviously with the fines and laws here, we risk being sent to prison just for using the correct sex – so not many people are willing to speak up”

Of course, a manifesto needs to convince the electorate, to get Labour into government. Is this an election issue? Yes, it is.

If anyone out there listening wants the Lesbian vote, Ruth from Rhyll has this advice to offer:

“Welcome us to the movement for a just society; with all our experiences and skills, we might just vote for you”.

Paula Boulton 26.09.22

LWD Fringe meeting at Labour Conference.