

How To Talk Politics With Each Other

People think politics is about politicians. It's not. It is – or should be - about everybody running society together as fellow-citizens. In Britain, the referendum on Europe showed that we need to talk to each other more about politics. So did Trump's win in America.

How To Talk Politics With Each Other

(And By-Pass Our Opponent's Media)

You can talk politics with people all the time. Most people are keen to voice their opinions. At work, as fellow-workers; as friends, relatives, neighbours, and in pubs and bars. You don't have to push it. You probably shouldn't. No 'lets talk politics'. It comes up naturally in conversation. People express views that are clearly political while appearing to think they aren't and that opens up the possibility for political debate. You can just take the opportunity to broaden it into a proper political discussion.

But you need to deal with this familiar view - 'Don't talk politics in the pub or club, or at family events'. Get over that early with 'Look, we're fellow-citizens. How we vote affects each other. Look at the EU referendum in Britain. Look at the election of Trump in the USA. We need to talk'. And "We're fellow-citizens, maybe fellow-workers (broadly speaking), maybe actual workmates, friends, neighbours, relatives. Politics affects us together. We have to talk about it together, you as well as me. It's part of being adult". And something else to say - 'OK, it usually gets heated. Let's talk but keep calm'. And - 'Look, we won't agree today (you never do). But we will each take away what the other said and think about it'. You do. People do change their mind that way. Long-term, you may need to deal with "There he/she goes again, on about politics". Deal with that, again, with the need for us to do it simply as mature citizens. Keep discussions mutual. For those who say "I'm not interested in politics" there's "Well politics is interested in you" as a response.

Also worth agreeing early as a general, shared position, is that we are all in favour of a fair and decent society. And that we realise that how we vote – or don't vote – is not just about each person's personal view on politics. That it's about us affecting each other. That it's a collective decision, not just an individual one. That as well as being fellow-citizens, for most people we are each a member of the working class, with common interests. Or if not fellow-workers, at least humanitarians or liberals – people in favour of treating others properly.

And in discussing politics, we need to be open with each other about who we vote for. It needed to be a secret ballot when

employers and landlords could punish you for not voting for their representatives. And it still does need to be a secret ballot as far as the state and employers not knowing how you vote. But between ourselves, equal citizens who aren't going to intimidate each other, it should be an open part of friendly political discussion.

In Britain, the Labour Party (I am a member) mainly talk to voters just before elections, by going round the streets knocking on doors. That's like approaching strangers and asking about their sex lives! And at election times it's too late, too little, when the business-owned media have been at people every day, over and over, for years. It's best, most naturally, done as above – talking to people you already have a relationship with, every day or whenever it comes up. Talking like this can overcome the media demonisation of our policies, parties and leaders.

In Britain before the 2017 election, the media claimed that Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn 'can't win voters over'. He did pretty well, of course. But that's not only his job. It's every Labour voter's job (if they feel up to it.) Jeremy Corbyn doesn't know your relatives, friends, neighbours, workmates. You do. Talk politics with them.

We need to talk to each other, and organise together, as citizens and as workers.

Party Leaders

Much of political debate treats politics as being about the party leaders. About their qualities as possible or actual Prime Ministers, their prospects and shortcomings, and of every little thing they say. This is ridiculous. It is 'We-need-messiahs' politics and is immature. It demeans the rest of us as citizens. In a proper democracy, we all matter.

Expecting as much from leaders as most people - and the media - do is doomed to failure anyway. While we do need leadership, it is foolish to expect them to be all-wise. They can't be. So argue against people going on and on about the qualities and failings of potential prime ministers or presidents. Or, at the opposite extreme, just saying they 'like' one more than another. And there's more to any party than the attributes of just one person.. Argue instead for supporting parties rather than leaders and for mass, mature, involved citizenship.

One reason people pay so much attention to who is leader is because they give up trying to make sense of politics themselves, with all the issues. So they take the easier option and 'Leave it to somebody else'. It's because they don't understand *the Free-market business system* and how business people dominate it and are responsible for most of the problems. It's not really so difficult to understand and talk about, when you locate discussion

in terms of this central political issue – that business people, the business class, have the most power in society; that most people are working class; that business people get power through being organised; that in response the rest need to organise too, mainly as workers, and are entitled to. My book *Look At The System* is a resource for this. It is free to download from www.lookatthesystem.com

Of course, we do need leaders. But the over-emphasis on them is a condemnation of our democracy. We should work towards a thorough, involved democracy, with widespread involvement of mature, rational citizens, acting together all through society. I've seen it done in the trade union movement. And going to political meetings needn't be onerous or boring, if discussions are openly organised, with small groups allowing everyone to speak, and small group sessions finished off with 'report back' sessions.

Urge Fellow-citizens to Vote Rationally

Here's some reasons people give for how they vote, or why they don't, that don't make sense, and how to respond:

People say 'I'm not voting for any of them. They're all as bad as each other.' Tell them that's never so. They are all disappointing in some way, that's always going to be true. But they are never all the same. There's simply too many issues and too many policies for the parties to be the same on all of them. Saying that is just being lazy.

And they'll say 'I'm not voting for a party because of (one issue)'. This isn't sensible when there are many issues and each party has policies on each issue. In the British political system, you don't usually get a vote on one issue. You vote for packages of policies. You need to decide on the best – or least bad - package. If they feel so strongly about one issue that they don't want to vote for a party, they should weigh up what the other parties are saying on that issue too. Prime example – after Parliament approved Tony Blair's war on Iraq, many, many Labour voters stopped voting Labour. But that only, eventually, helped to allow the Tories into government. And they had backed him on Iraq. And they were far worse than Blair on domestic issues.

And whatever parties, their leaders or candidate have done or not done, once you get to the final list of candidates, to casting your vote, to the ballot paper, one of them must be the least bad, at that point; and you are surely better off with them in government than a worse one. So, in Britain, it means, even when Labour governments don't do as much as you'd like them too, Labour is always the best option for most people. They should never let the Conservatives in. Nor should they vote for UKIP, whose only policy is to blame outsiders. In the USA, Sander's supporters should have

voted for Hillary Clinton, with her failings, rather than letting Trump win. Sanders supporters needed to say – ‘We’ve had a go at winning the Democratic candidature. We didn’t manage it. Maybe next time. Now support the least bad’. And stay-at-home Democrats should have turned out. They helped Trump to get in.

Similarly, in protest against what Labour has done, some will say they are voting for a minor party. They see it as teaching Labour a lesson. But they damage themselves as much as Labour. Most often it’s in a constituency where the minor party has no chance of winning. So the ‘protest’ vote just allows another of the major parties – worse than Labour has been - to win the seat. Where they have a long-term commitment to the small party, and are looking to build it in the long term, maybe it makes sense. But at any particular election, all they are doing is allowing somebody worse in. If it is part of a long-term campaign to build the minor party, there are better ways to do it than the protest vote. They and others need to build that party long-term, in between elections, not just with a futile protest vote. And maybe that party should make tactical decisions about how supporters should vote in each election, to get the best or least-bad party or candidate in.

And of course not voting because ‘they’re all as bad as each other’ makes no sense. They are not all as bad as each other, so with your vote, you can make sure the least bad and not the worst gets in. You should vote.

Then, whatever you can say about each party, there’s one over-riding issue - their intentions.

Intentions – Governing Is Not Just Managerialism

In Britain the Labour Party loses votes and elections because the business-owned, conservative ‘newspapers’ convince people that Labour is not competent to manage the economy. It’s a myth anyway – see www.lookatthesystem.com *Intentions As Well As Competence*.

The focus on simple competence leads many people to just vote for ‘change’. They’ll say “Let’s give the other lot a try”. They vote for a party simply because they are unhappy with the existing government. Many people voted for Trump for this reason. It’s because they don’t have a clear view of the system; the present situation is unsatisfactory (it always will be, to a degree) and they just take the easy way offered to them with the vote to just try something different. It’s not a thought-out or useful approach.

But it needs arguing with such people that there’s more to it than competence. The competence accusation against Labour rests on the false notion that managing the economy is a neutral skill. That all parties share the intention to govern well for all and it’s just about managerial ability. When people raise the issue of

competence, first ask them to look at something else - what are a party's intentions anyway? What are they, who are they for? What do they try to do?

Conservatives don't intend to manage the country for everybody. They aim to manage it for their own people, the people they represent – business people and rich people. The business **class**. And for just enough of the rest – managers, sections of skilled workers – to get enough votes to win elections. Yet they present themselves as doing what is best for everybody and get away with it. It's quite an achievement! But it's also all our own faults for not organising and educating each other enough to show them up, for allowing many of us to get their political news and opinions from them – from the other side's 'newspapers'. They set the agenda for broadcast comment too - 'the media' generally.

Labour and other Social Democratic parties do aim to do their best for the majority. But they are seriously obstructed by the media. We don't talk to each other much about politics, but they do - they talk to us relentlessly. The media deeply influence voters. They divert enough of them into blaming outsiders for problems to undermine progressive parties who, correctly, blame them, the business class. And they generally undermine Labour's credibility with voters.

To pull people out of their influence, it is necessary to show that most of 'the media' is business people influencing voters in the interests of business people. Before that, it first needs to be widely known that business people dominate politics, not only through the media but also because, as businesses, they are the economy.

And it needs to be widely known that their demonization of outsiders of various kinds is done consciously, to divert some people from blaming them, the business class and their **Free-market Business System**, for problems. We - ordinary people - need to by-pass them, need to talk to each other directly, as fellow-citizens and as fellow-workers. And the Labour Party need to talk to voters independently of this anti-Labour media.

Labour are also obstructed by us, though. Not enough of us are prepared to vote for them on more determined programmes to properly challenge business people and conservatives, regulate them, and manage society for the majority, the non-business people. It's up to us to talk to each other more and persuade each other to vote for them do that.

If not Labour (or Democrat, or whatever non-conservative party) it's up to us to talk to each other more and persuade each other to vote for parties genuinely on our side.