



## Do you support postal workers' strike plan?

Royal Mail workers have voted in favour of national strike action over fears for their job security. As a winter of discontent nears, we ask if you sympathise...



**PETER PATERSON**  
62, retired surgeon,  
Torrance, East  
Dunbartonshire

I'm sympathetic but obviously I want my mail. I think they've got a good cause; it's a reasonable thing to strike about. It seems like they've downsized the Post Office and left them the less profitable jobs to do. It should be kept a public service. If you need a document there's no other way to get it.



**JAMIE GORDON**  
28, actor, Edinburgh  
I can understand why they're frustrated because the postal

service has changed a lot. They're working longer hours for less money. But at the same time I think they've had it pretty cushy for years.



**JAZZY DESVI**  
26, debt collector, Giffnock,  
East Renfrewshire

I think they're paid enough as it is. I think it will be worse as it gets near Christmas time so they've been quite strategic about it.



**SIOBHAN McDOUGALL**  
22, clerical assistant,  
Crookston, Glasgow

I support them. I don't think enough people are challenging their employers. I know it's an inconvenience but that's life.



**DENNIS ALCOCK**  
81, retired electrician,  
Newcastle under Lyme  
Both sides think they're on the right so I don't

know. I don't think a strike will do much good. If they talk, if they discuss it rationally, it will be better. I like the Post Office, every town has one and you can take money out there.



**L. BENZIE**  
60, nurse, Aberdeen  
I think in this day and age everyone who has a job should keep it

and be happy with what they've got. We're getting to a stage we don't need the Post Office. It seems like it's mainly delivering junk and circulars.

**MORE COMMENT ONLINE**  
[bigissuescotland.com](http://bigissuescotland.com)

## BRENDAN O'NEILL

The 'C' word has become a cynical tool for politicians to paper over their lack of vision



**F**or those of us who like the idea of change, especially far-reaching radical change, it seems the forthcoming general election will offer a feast for the political senses.

The party conference season has confirmed that the two big parties of British parliamentary politics – New Labour and the Conservatives – are about change. David Cameron said in his speech to his party conference that “change” is the word that best defines his party today.

Last year Cameron penned the foreword to a book titled *A Party of Change: A Brief History of the Conservatives* and more recently he has claimed to be launching a “movement for change”. Gordon Brown used the word “change” nearly 50 times in his speech to the Labour Party conference. Peter Mandelson, who used it 38 times, said next year's general election will be a “change election”. He said New Labour was “restless for change”, would “argue for change” and would become “the real change-makers in British politics”.

So can we look forward to a radical overhaul after the general election, a sizeable



**TIMES ARE A CHANGING**  
DAVID CAMERON RALLIES THE TORY FAITHFUL AT THE PARTY CONFERENCE IN MANCHESTER WHILE (BELOW) A 'PORKY PIES' STICKER SUMS UP THE DELEGATES' ATTITUDE TOWARDS GORDON BROWN

not the past.” In other words, we should not hold Labour to account but take at face value its promise that it will “change”, and presumably become New New Labour.

Mandelson is attempting to write off 12 years of pretty bad politics under New Labour: three disastrous wars (yes, I'm including Kosovo alongside Afghanistan and Iraq), an all-out assault on civil liberties, and a dearth of vision about how to deal with the recession. We should insist elections are about the future *and* the past. Many voters will vote on the basis of the events of the past decade – and to kick out of office many of those who were responsible for them.

“Change” has become the buzzword of our age because the parties are no longer rooted in a clear set of values; they lack any real attachment to a grassroots support base. Thus they flit from one idea to another, from one PR stunt to the next – and they dress up such discombobulation as “change”.

That's why Cameron can claim to be leading a “movement for change” – not because he has a vision for Britain (apart from putting windmills on roofs and hugging “hoodies”) but because the Tories feel cut off from their traditions. With an ageing membership and a chequered history, they are increasingly rudderless; have no political anchor or definite moral values. Yet rather than address this problem, Cameron sexes it up, describing the Conservatives as “the party of change”.

He's making a virtue out of a crisis. This is not real change, certainly not the kind that many of us want to see. Instead the C-word is being used to stifle debate and to tart up the political parties' internal confusions as something positive. ●

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### 'Change' has become a banner for politicians to hide behind

shift from the old ways of doing politics to something new, better, more progressive?

Not likely. For today's political parties, “change” does not really mean moving on and improving – rather “change” has become a banner behind which politicians who don't want to discuss the past, and who are uncertain about the future, can hide.

Our leaders are uttering the C-word cynically, as a way of distancing themselves from their own actions and papering over the fact that they have no vision for the future.

For many party officials, the myopic focus on “change” is a way of discouraging discussion about what has already happened: “Never mind all the bad things we did – we are now going to change!” It is extraordinary that New Labour, a party in government for 12 years and of which the British public has quite clearly had enough, can now claim to be “restless for change”.

Mandelson said at the Labour Party conference: “You win elections on the future,



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