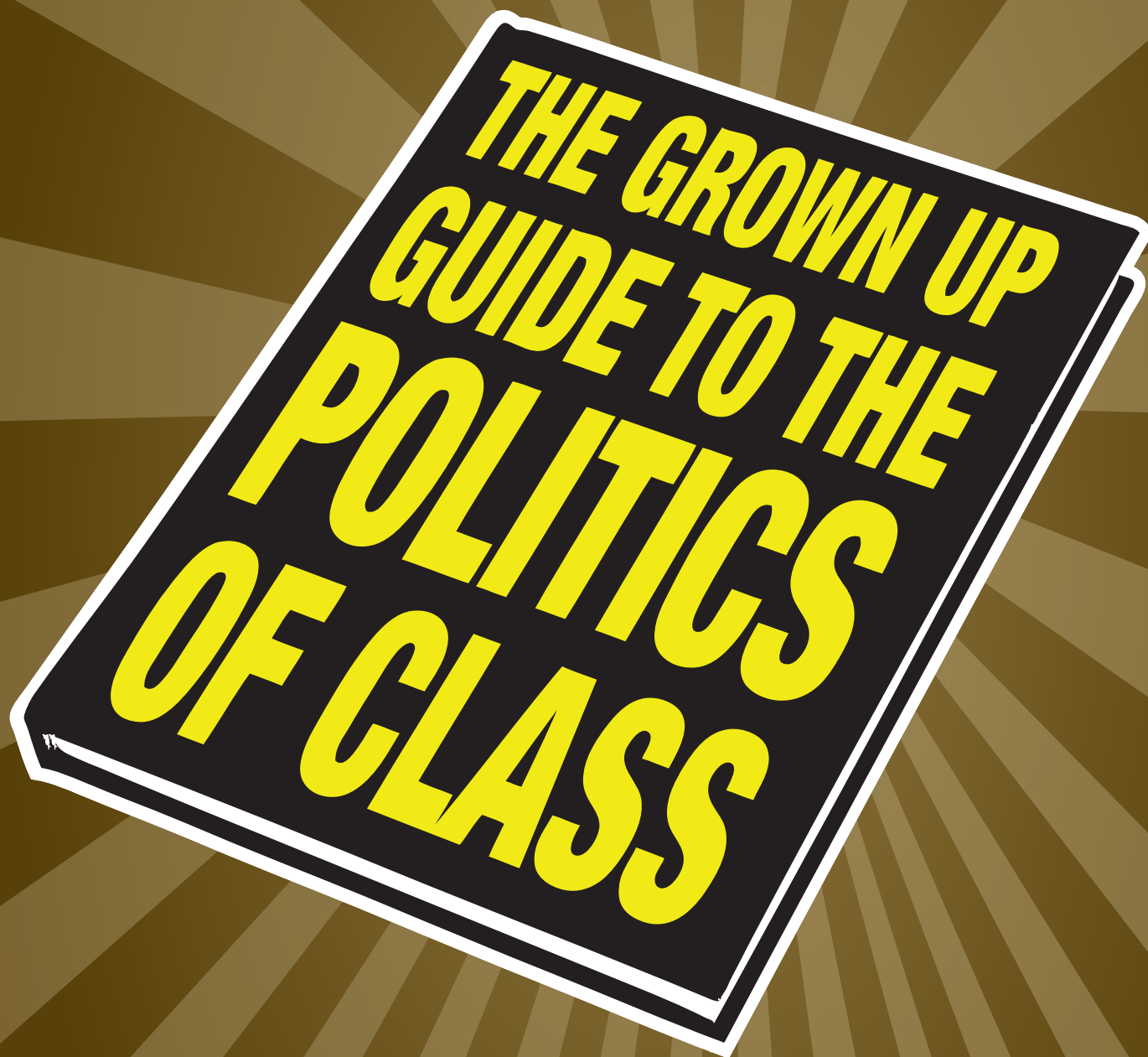


Fabian Review

The
Class Issue

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Summer 2008



**With David Blunkett, Danny Dorling,
David Cannadine, Louise Bamfield
and Sharon Hodgson.**

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Adrian Teal



The Obama Factor

Is excitement at the US election just West Wing style escapism amidst the British political gloom? Or could Labour yet recapture its own audacity to hope?

Our Prime Minister is a fan of reality television, seeing in the X-Factor a metaphor for unlocking talent. So he must have been thrilled to see the Democracy Idol show which has gripped America this primary season, catapulting a new star, Illinois Senator Barack Obama, to the brink of a historic Presidency.

The contest has demonstrated America's remarkable capacity for democratic renewal. Whoever wins, John McCain's vanquishing of the Republican right means that the next US President will know that global warming is real, and that using torture is both wrong and counter-productive. But Obama offers transformative potential. Even if he must ultimately disappoint some of the diverse hopes projected onto him, his inaugural address could begin to repair America's battered global reputation much more rapidly than has ever seemed possible during these disastrous Bush years.

Britain is not America. As we celebrate sixty years of universal health-care, that remains a cause unfulfilled for progressive America. But winds of political change do frequently cross the Atlantic. After the Thatcher-

Reagan era, the New Democrats deeply influenced New Labour and a generation of European social democrats. Many policy lessons for governing in the global age remain relevant. As politics, this once-modernising formula is badly dated. Hillary Clinton's Democratic primary defeat brings the long 1990s to a symbolic close.

Clinton was, in part, unlucky. She won over 17 million primary votes. If her 'inevitability strategy' fatally underestimated Obama, she was hardly alone in that. She ended a much stronger campaigner than she began, when championing lower-income Americans left out by a boom which never trickled down. (But note too how badly the populist gambit of an August gas tax holiday flopped).

Obama's success is not simply down to personal charisma, or the symbolic possibility of the first black President. Two important lessons are not about his race or his personality:

Firstly, words matter. New Labour's response to Mario Cuomo's dilemma - that 'we campaign in poetry but govern in prose' - was too often to manage expectations downwards and make sure we cam-

paigned in prose too. 'Forward, not back' and please take care not to wake up the voters. Hope-mongers face their own challenges. A President Obama would need to educate his movement for the longer haul of delivering change through politics.

But the Clinton campaign's argument that this was to offer 'false hope' was deeply conservative. Labour must rediscover its sense of mission. Only by standing proudly for our cause of a fairer Britain, and what government must do to make it possible, could Labour make a fight of the next election.

Second, inspiration needs organisation. Obama's bottom-up movement out-organised a formidable political machine. The lessons go much deeper than fundraising. This was a revolution in political mobilisation. Obama has brought a new cohort of younger activists and voters into politics because he was prepared to let go and trust supporters with the power and tools to organise on his behalf.

As David Lammy argued in his recent Fabian lecture, this is light years away from the way we do politics

here. The spectre of past divisions makes the instinct to control paramount. So our institutions do much to sap political energy and boil off hope. As the Facing Out pamphlet advocated, much lower barriers to entry and an openness to internal

pluralism are essential for the Labour Party to be part of a broader campaigning progressive movement.

This would be to turn the culture of party politics inside out. This may be too much to ask. If so, the US election, like the much missed West

Wing, would offer nothing more than a shot of political escapism, an idle reverie amidst the deepening Westminster gloom. Yet we know that Labour has a mission and a soul. Might we even now rediscover the audacity to hope? SK

CLASS ACT

David Blunkett, David Lammy, Stella Creasy and Austin Mitchell proved that it is possible to have an intelligent conversation about class in Britain at a well attended Fabian Local Societies Annual Tea event at the start of July. Reflecting on the 50th anniversary of Michael Young's *The Rise of the Meritocracy*, Stella Creasy said it was worth remembering that women brought about the revolution in the famous dystopia.



LESSONS FROM AMERICA

There was an enthusiastic response to David Lammy's reading of what British politics could learn from the US election campaign. He argued that a loosening of the 'politics of control' was needed to mobilise a new progressive movement. The full speech can be read at www.fabians.org.uk. The Fabians will again debate this theme in Manchester.

HARMAN PRAISES FABIANS ON EQUALITY

Deputy Labour party leader Harriet Harman said that equality must provide Labour's defining value and that her new Equality Bill was an example of the sort of lasting change of which the Labour government should be proud. Harman praised the Fabians for their work on life chances and equality at the Fabian Summer Reception in

the House of Commons. Guardian political commentator Michael White warned against any 'pointless lurches to the left' by the government but said that 'pointful' lurches forward were well worth considering.



DATES FOR THE DIARY

- The Labour party conference takes place from Saturday 20th September. An extensive programme of Fabian events will take place in Manchester Town Hall – outside the secure zone - through the week. See www.fabians.org.uk for listings, which will appear in the Autumn Fabian Review. The Society will also hold events at the LibDem and Conservative conferences addressing issues of inequality, including as part of our major project with the Webb Memorial Trust on inequality and poverty in an age of affluence.
- The Fabian Society will hold a number of major conferences in 2009. More details will appear in the next Fabian Review and on the website.
- We will hold a London conference on the Saturday after the US Presidential election – Saturday November 8th – to discuss the progressive response.
- The 2009 New Year Conference on the theme of equality will take place on Saturday 19th January 2009.
- A major Fabian Society and Webb Memorial Trust conference to mark the centenary of the 1909 minority report on the poor law will take place on Saturday 21st February 2009.

Fabian Review is the quarterly journal of the Fabian Society

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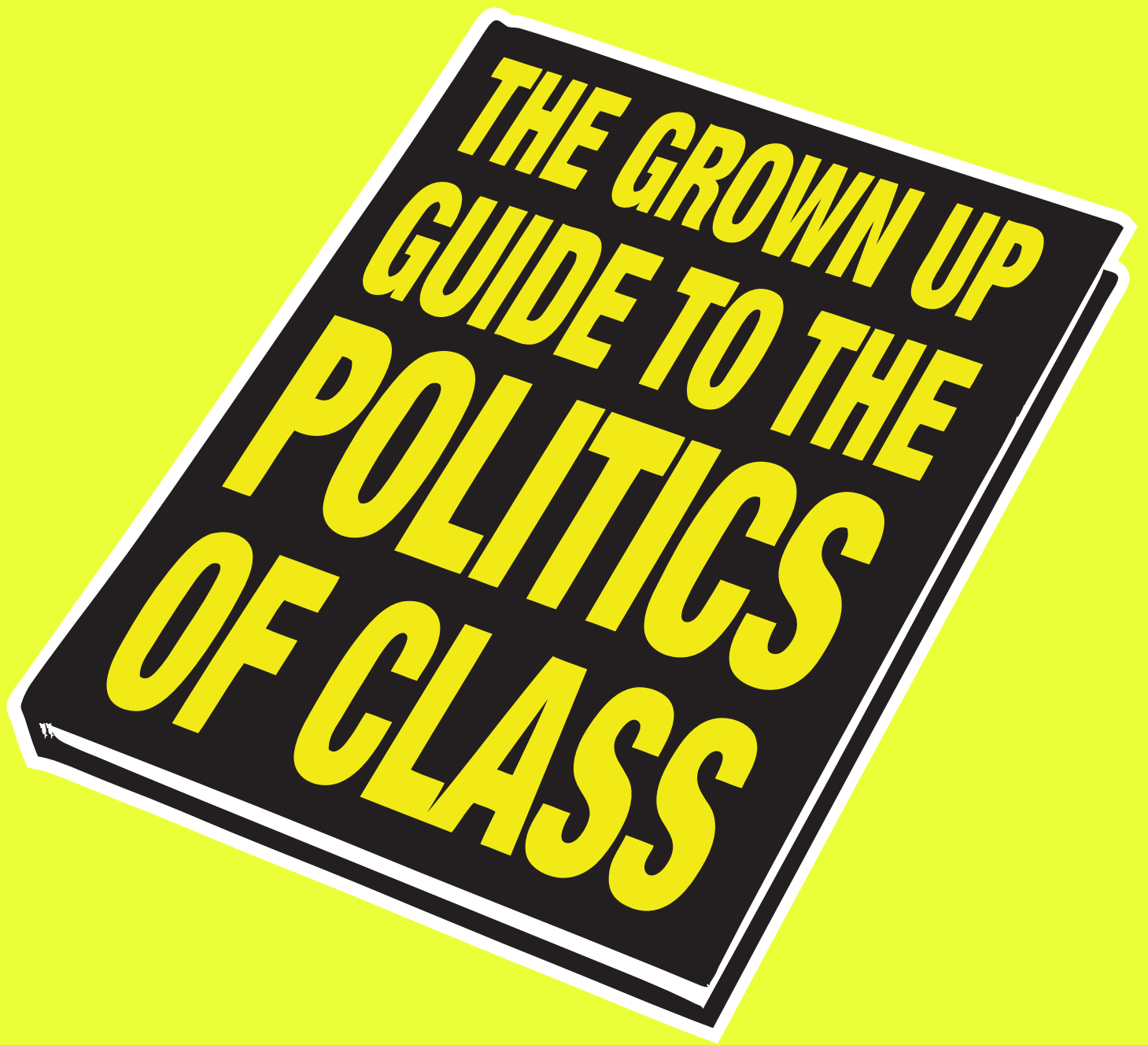
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Fifty years after Michael Young satirised a meritocratic future, nobody is quite sure whether we can still talk about class and inequality in Britain today. Certainly the disastrous Crewe by-election ‘toffs’ stunt was an object lesson in how not to do it.

This Fabian Review shows that we can have an intelligent conversation about class. We assess how class structures people’s everyday lives in Britain today, what has and hasn’t changed in the last decade, and what we should say and do about class now.

CLASS



is far from DEAD

IT'S JUST HIDING

Louise Bamfield, Fabian Senior Research Fellow, seeks out the truth about class in Britain today.

Does class still matter? Does a hierarchy of status and privilege still operate in Britain today? The answer is a definite 'yes', though perhaps a less resounding one than would have been the case a few decades ago. Our class origins – where we are born and who our parents are – continue to shape our experiences and opportunities as children and still dominate our chances throughout life.

The problem is that the British are confused by class, though they do know that it still exists and they tend not to like its effects. For sociologists and market researchers, class used to mean your occupation or employment status, or your income and level of education. More recently they have grouped people by their assets, wealth or 'capital', which can be passed down to the next generation. However it is defined, class is about being something and not being something else – being 'above' or 'below' other people on a vertical scale of privilege and prestige.

What makes class so confusing, however, is that the

objective facts about class – the social inequalities that exist in people's life chances – no longer marry up with people's subjective sense of who

How would you respond if you were asked to rank your friends and acquaintances according to social class?

they are and the opportunities they have available. When asked about class in general terms, most people find it easy to talk about class 'out there', as it relates to other people, especially when they describe the caricatures of the 'toff' and 'chav' at the top and bottom of the social

scale. It is when people are asked to apply those labels to themselves that they tend to become rather coy, if not downright defensive.

How would you respond, I wonder, if you were asked to rank your friends and acquaintances according to so-

cial class? My guess is that most people would simply refuse, partly because the task is difficult – the class categories are so vague – but also because the idea of explicitly comparing our socio-economic status to other people, especially those closest to us, makes us feel deeply uncomfortable.

So most people, though by no means all of us, resist a definite class or group category. A sense of working-class identity remains important to some, particularly to men in manual occupations living in northern parts of the country. But the majority of the population retreat instinctively to the safety of the middle ground, occupied by ‘normal’, ‘ordinary’ people like themselves.

This class reticence is not surprising. The working class has become less of a cultural reference point in British culture since de-industrialisation and the decline of trade unions and the Labour movement. Economic restructuring and changing employment patterns have blurred the lines of occupational and social status, while the expansion of higher education has diminished much of the social cache attached to having a degree. The media also plays its part, by acting as if we are all interested in what are actually the concerns of the affluent elite – focusing on fast cars and foreign holidays by emphasising shared interclass concerns, such as crime and anti-social behaviour; and by downplaying working class concerns about job security and low pay.

Class appears less relevant in this age of individual choice and consumption. How we earn our money can seem of minor importance – what distinguishes us far more is how we spend it. Show me the shopping basket, and I’ll show you the man or woman, as market researchers might say. Matters of individual taste and preference are more important to people’s sense of self than they once were, for obvious reasons. The irony is, of course, that while people believe their choices are an expression of individuality, collective patterns of consumption fit as neatly into traditional socio-economic hierarchies as people’s occupational status.

And yet, to reduce class to a matter of consumers’ choices is to ignore the striking class differences in life chances that persist over time. A baby’s chances of surviving the first year of life; children’s chances of achieving good educational qualifications; young adults’ chances of entering rewarding and well-paid employment, and of going on to live a long and flourishing life – all these are still strongly affected by parents’ income, education and other resources.

Class is far from dead; but explicit references to class tend to alienate instead of illuminate. The language of adversarial class warfare is particularly toxic, inducing images of a bygone political era – of strikes, strife and shortages.

Indeed, people still strongly recognise these differences and have a clear sense of the educational and other advantages that money can bring. And they aren’t happy about it. As the Sutton Trust recently found, seven out of ten people think that parents’ income plays too big a part in determining children’s life chances. What is often under-appreciated by people generally is the extent to which the social and cultural elite is so successful in reproducing itself through the institutions of education. The education system is meritocratic enough to reward talent and ability when individuals are given the opportunity to develop it. But the upper reaches of the system operate as what you might call a ‘closed meritocracy’, with access to top institutions depending as much on financial resources and the possession of the right inside knowledge, in the form of social and cultural capital, as it does to educational potential.

This explains why, in the same poll for the Sutton Trust, more than half (54 per cent) believed that people in Britain have equal opportunities to get ahead. In other words, people want to believe that society is basically fair and open to talent and motivation, whilst still recognising the undue influence of parents’ income. This apparent contradiction probably owes much to the power of anecdote: tales of a friend or family member making it against the odds tend to have much greater force than dry factual evidence about statistical chances.

All of which presents an obvious dilemma for politicians. Class is far from dead; but explicit references to class tend to alienate instead of illuminate. The language of adversarial class warfare is particularly toxic, inducing images of a bygone political era – of strikes, strife and shortages.

But while explicit references to class are best avoided, the imagery of class is invoked in more subtle ways all the time. As David Cannadine observes in this issue of the *Fabian Review*, the most successful politicians over the last thirty years have been those who have captured a popular mood, presenting themselves as being on the side of ‘ordinary’ people like ‘us’ – variably described as ‘decent’, ‘aspiring’, ‘hardworking’ and so on – against a distant, out-of-touch *élite* at the top, or against alleged free-riders at the bottom.

Labour must find ways of talking about class and inequality in terms that are positive, popular and progressive – and which resonate with people’s clear sense of fairness and reciprocity. This is not a hopeless task: there is strong public support for policies which remove unfair barriers and disadvantages, such as maintenance grants for students from low-income families to access university and Labour should build on these.

The case for tackling *unfair advantages* is more difficult, but not impossible. People recognise the undue influence of parental income on children’s life chances; though they are cautious about taking advantages away from children and young people, however privileged their upbringing. Tackling the closed meritocracy at the top of the education system is a basic matter of fairness – the way forward is to show how the current system benefits only a tiny handful, and that opening up opportunities will benefit the vast majority of ‘ordinary’, ‘aspirational’ people like themselves.

Time to play

the fairness card

Chris Leslie says that New Labour's principles should mean raising taxes at the very top to share the burden.

How can Gordon Brown regain momentum and capture the public's interest? Reacting appropriately to external events, governing competently, avoiding silly mistakes are – of course – all important disciplines for Labour to deploy. But the country needs more than sound administration. It needs a Government that strikes a chord with the public mood, that collective sense of justice and decency which people expect their leaders to defend on their behalf.

The British public are highly aspirational and we cherish our freedoms, including the freedom to earn a just reward for hard work and enterprise. But this is accompanied – in a delicate balance – with a parallel sense of fairness, an instinctive belief that everyone (but especially those in senior positions) should conduct themselves appropriately, according to fair laws. A belief that behaviour (whether social, economic or political) should be responsible, unselfish and unexploitative. Today's newspaper editors have a nose for fairness issues, and trade on capturing this public sentiment in succinct stories. Sometimes the news focuses on corporate excess: extortionate bank charges; punitive mortgage exit fees; unacceptable executive behaviour on Terminal 5 or Northern Rock. But we also expect fair play from the rest of society too. We expect sentences to be served in full by those found guilty, for immigration policy to be run according to the rules, and for politicians to act in fairly whether they're designing the tax system or dealing with the postcode lottery in healthcare.

The British sense of fairness is strong and the vast majority of voters will confirm their support for those who fight for fair play and act against excess, irresponsibility, prejudice and greed. After a decade in power, Labour must reconnect with these values which motivate party activists and supporters as well as the rest of the electorate.

Being in Government is tough – the turbulence of political events now compounded by the apparently uncontrollable trends of global economics. Every day there are dozens of urgent issues requiring an administrative fix, but are we allowing these to crowd out the most important strategic goals that the Government ought to pursue?

It may sound pompous to the Westminster village cynic, but I believe we need Government to raise its sights, to take inspiration from Labour's distinctive mission and to act with greater idealism. We need more than sound technocratic management – our Ministers should be waking up each morning, stepping back from the swirl of the daily grind, and asking themselves "how can my actions today create a society in which power, wealth and opportunity are placed in the hands of the many, not the few?"

In short, Labour needs a 'clause four' moment. Not a rewrite or adjustment, nor a fundamental rethink. Quite simply, the Government needs to pause and remind itself about the peerless force of Labour's core values as expressed in the new Clause 4 adopted by the party thirteen years ago:

"The Labour Party is a democratic socialist party. It believes that by the strength of our common endeavour we achieve more than we achieve alone, so as to create for each of us the means to realise our true potential and for all of us a community in which power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many, not the few, where the rights we enjoy reflect the duties we owe, and where we live together, freely, in a spirit of solidarity, tolerance and respect."

Labour needs a succinct offer that is fresh and appealing, not harking back to achievements of old.

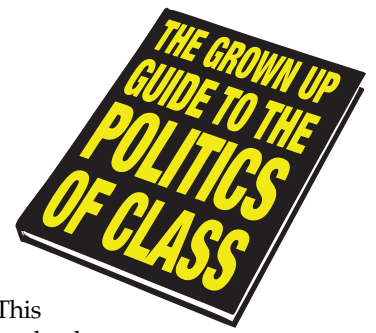
Labour needs a succinct offer that is fresh and appealing, not harking back to achievements of old

wage and the New Deal for the unemployed were massive steps forward that tapped into the core values of fairness and social justice right at the heart of British society. Yet how, in the 21st century, can

Labour reassert its credentials as the party fighting for fairness and fair play?

I want to suggest three steps. The first requires a frank stock-take about where unfairness and injustice still remains. Our economy is relatively strong as a whole, but





The banks have acted recklessly, causing a credit crunch for which ordinary hard-working people now have to pay the price. Despite this, HSBC's top six executives will pocket £120million between them over the next three years, just one example of unfair profit-taking among the predicted £12 billion of city bonuses paid in the first three months of this year alone.

there are still glaring anomalies that persist way beyond any fair notions of just reward. Take the current anxieties over oil and energy. We are witnessing record profit taking, with BP and Shell netting a combined £7 billion first quarter surplus just this year, despite the North Sea oil levy introduced in 2002 and increased modestly in 2005. At a time when the vast majority of the public are feeling the pinch from increasing energy and fuel bills, why not follow Obama's suggestion and introduce a new windfall levy on the oil companies' excess profits to pay for the suspension of the 5 per cent VAT on fuel currently paid by ordinary households? Taking a fair share of this profit and hypothecating the money to reduce energy costs would resonate with the vast majority of the public, and remind everyone of the reasons for Labour's existence. This would seem fair to me. But falling short of this, Labour should at least be publicly calling for restraint on profiteering. Fairness is necessary always, but especially when times are hard. Gordon Brown captured the public's imagination with the windfall tax on the excessive profits of privatised utilities to fund the New Deal for employment a decade ago. How bold such a move would seem today!

Secondly, it isn't just the oil companies whose behaviour is out of order at a time when responsibility and humility should be the order of the day. The banks have acted recklessly, causing a credit crunch for which ordinary hard-working people now have to pay the price. Despite this, HSBC's top six executives will pocket £120million between them over the next three years, just one example of unfair profit-taking among the predicted £12 billion of city bonuses paid in the first three months of this year alone. If those at the top of society cannot exercise a measure of responsibility that shows some self-awareness and restraint, then why should others follow suit? Of course, the Government is right to act and shore up the financial system, reasserting stability in the market – but there should also be a policy response to this injustice. Why not consider a new 10p in the pound 'community payback' levy on incomes above £250,000 per annum, which could fund a £200 cut in council tax for every household in the country? Asking the very richest few to give a break to the many seems an obvious Labour approach that even the Tories would have to support.

Finally, our politicians need to set an example and act fairly at a time when ordi-

nary people have such low expectations of the behaviour of elected representatives. This

needs to go beyond salary restraint. Members of Parliament should serve their constituents first and foremost, regarding the taxpayer as their paymaster above all others. If MPs have excessive outside earnings from consultancies and directorships, then people perceive that they are diverted from the public interest – or worse, that they are exploiting their public status. Labour could be bold and propose a ban on outside earnings for MPs, or at the very least should emulate the American cap on external income at 15% of a Member's annual salary. Such is the crisis of confidence in politics that only radical steps such as this can hope to impress a sceptical public. There are some who argue that outside interests help enrich parliamentary debate and create a diverse mix of expertise and experience. I have no problem with MPs holding other positions or roles – but why do they have to be personally remunerated for these? By all means, continue to be involved in business and the wider community, just keep the money out of it. This would seem fair to me.

When Gordon Brown addressed the Fabian Society annual conference two years ago, his theme of 'Britishness' received more media coverage than the underlying argument at its core – that he saw society's essential values to be "liberty for all, responsibility from all and fairness to all". Now, at the first anniversary of Gordon's premiership, it is more important than ever for these guiding principles to be brought to life, to be illustrated in the policy choices he makes as prime minister, to be urgently converted into tangible steps that persuade an ever sceptical electorate. There is no more need to set out grand expositions of vision or purpose – the Prime Minister has laid this ground, chapter and verse, over 25 years in Parliament. At a time when it is increasingly hard for the Government to be heard, or for nuanced departmental initiatives to set the news agenda, clear and decisive action on fairness would unequivocally remind people what Labour stands for today.

Chris Leslie is Director of the New Local Government Network and a former government minister. He coordinated Gordon Brown's 2007 Labour leadership campaign.



GO FOR IT!

David Blunkett tells Rachael Jolley and Tom Hampson that class still trumps ability at the top, and that it requires a bold strategy to redistribute opportunity.

Showing no sign of mellowing, David Blunkett is still forceful in his prescription for Labour's election success. He believes that Brown should come out fighting for fairness as hard and as aggressively as if Labour were back in opposition, with a range of measures to tackle disadvantage while engaging with middle class voters' worries.

"We should go for it ... That might mean saying we will massively increase child benefit – including people who currently get an allowance as part of social security – and that we'll tax it. Because the benefit would then remain universal, but it would actually then be redistributive."

"We need to change the society we live in, so that if you really do have the talent, and the ability, you don't get knocked out of being a senior civil servant, or a senior judge, or a senior

medic, because of your background. And at the moment, you still do. You are still trumped by the old system. Call it class if you want, but you're still trumped by it."

Sitting in his Commons office, Blunkett outlined how education must be central to the fightback. FE colleges needed more money, private schools continued to be socially divisive and should do more to earn their charitable status, and Cambridge was only paying 'lip service' to reaching out to more state school students

Since quitting the Department of Work and Pensions after an emotionally wracking media frenzy over his public and private life, David Blunkett has been spending a lot of time in Sheffield and has found solace in dealing with the everyday work on a local MP. "The greatest en-

ergiser and restorer of my beliefs and my energy to carry on, is going back into my constituency. I've probably got more zeal now than I've had for years."

His bulldog-tough approach to policy still finds the oxygen of publicity in his weekly column for *The Sun*, where he plays his demotic card and recently came out in favour of Housing Minister Caroline Flint's argument that council housing tenants need to commit to finding work in exchange for their place on housing lists.

He believes that getting the message right in the run-up to the election is about making stronger connections with the public and away from Westminster. The questions the public want answers to are "Do you understand what's worrying us? ... Don't you have the same hopes as we have? And

"We need to change the society we live in, so that if you really do have the talent, and the ability, you don't get knocked out of being a senior civil servant, or a senior judge, or a senior medic, because of your background. And at the moment, you still do. You are still trumped by the old system. Call it class if you want, but you're still trumped by it"

how are you going to make politics work better for that?"

Blunkett says that when he asks his constituents directly whether things have got better under Labour, they say no. But when he starts pointing out the 60 per cent improvement in employment, or the rebuilding of every single local secondary school, or additional facilities in local colleges, then they acknowledge the change, but won't necessarily put it down to government action. There is a disconnect in people's minds between these things, and he is not sure why.

As was seen in Labour's Crewe and Nantwich by-election campaign, the politics of class is now a very difficult area for the Party to approach. The tricky line that the Labour Party has to walk is to fight against injustice and poverty, while still appealing to the aspirations of that wide-ranging group sitting in the middle class, Blunkett believes. He cautions against "... the idea that you could be constantly elected by appealing to the most disadvantaged, dispossessed, and discriminated against. Because the whole purpose of the Labour Government is to stop you being disadvantaged, dispossessed, and discriminated against."

The former Education Secretary sees that one route to getting the politics of class right lies in widening educational opportunities. "When I was a child... you had a very large working class and a very small, hard core of those who weren't working, and were really badly off. What's changed is that there's a much bigger, reasonably well-off, core of people ... hence the rise from 8 per cent to 40 per cent who go to university. When I went to university, it was 8 per cent."

Widening this group by tackling inequality and encouraging aspiration among families who do not have a tradition of going through further or

higher education must be a priority now, he told us. Some constituencies – he points to his own as an example – still show extremely low numbers of young people going on to university. Targeted action in these areas, such as improved FE colleges, is beginning to change attitudes, he says. "The staying-on rate at 16 has dramatically improved, and the beginning – just the beginning – of a growth in expectation of going to university is there." But he is not content with that state of affairs. In the next two years, he urges a rethink on the distribution of cash to FE colleges.

"I think there needs to be a long, hard look at the resourcing from 2010 through local government for areas of very low take-up of post-16 and of higher education, and I think the Government's got two years to start to think that through, because if we use the existing distribution system for grants to local government, we'll merely reinforce disadvantage."

Perhaps braver now that he is out of office, he is now able to voice his strong feelings about private education and its impact on the whole of society. He argues private education "does mean that the divide of opportunity through life continues to be emphasised, and in some ways, in real terms, increased".

"I think we still shy away from a number of issues, and I think this is one of them, because [we have seen this] as the kind of issue that would be turned against us. If you're touching on an issue like private education and its affordability, then there's a jumpiness about whether that means that somehow you've opened a new class war."

He contends that as Education Secretary he, and then Estelle Morris, forced private schools to do more to earn their charitable status, but "the

more we can do that, the better, so I think that if people expect privileges – because that's what it is, in relation to their tax status' – then earning it is really crucial".

And as Blunkett sees it there needs to be greater awareness that Oxbridge universities' admissions systems, particularly at interview stage, can be skewed towards a certain type of approach and learning, a style traditionally taught at private schools. "Those who have been through a particular system themselves have a real conceptual difficulty in understanding what we're talking about, because for them it's perfectly natural to interview in a particular way, and to expect a particular approach from that young person, knowledge, background, their presentation, and their understanding of how that particular university operates."

This kind of discrimination in favour of private schools is subtle rather than systematic. "You don't even have to discriminate positively in favour of these children, it's an automatic process that happens where the tutor has an expectation for the pupil, the pupil is tutored for that expectation to be fulfilled, and the contacts – natural contacts – of people they know and eat with, and go on holiday with, exist to do it."

Changing deep-set attitudes about who is allowed to be where is something Blunkett battled against all his life. Even at the heady heights of the Westminster world, as an MP and cabinet minister, Blunkett encountered snobbery about his working-class roots from the media and from colleagues on "the patronising left – the people who hadn't grown up on a council estate, and are quite paternalistic towards disadvantage."

"What I hadn't [expected] was the bitterness against a lad from a council estate. People actually writing, that I should've stayed where I was. I've had people ask me why I write about wine. You know – surely I come from a background of beer and woodbines. Well I do, but I never liked beer and woodbines! That was the problem."

You can read the full transcript of this interview online at www.fabians.org.uk

In conversation with

Professor David Cannadine

Britain's leading historian of class tells Hannah Jameson and Tom Hampson that New Labour has never been clear what it thinks about class. But can they tackle inequality without understanding class?



Thatcher and class:

TH: What do you think the long term effects of Thatcherism on class were?

If by class one means economic inequality, then the effect of Thatcherism has been to broaden inequality. If by class one means how we visualise inequality in social terms, then what was interesting about Thatcher was that she didn't really like aristocratic social hierarchies, but was much more comfortable either presenting herself as a crusading populist on the side of 'us against them' or as someone who believed in self made middle class entrepreneurial attributes. And she articulated, and promoted both of those images of society very successfully, which remain the pervasive images to this day. Since Thatcher, New Labour has gone to great trouble to position itself as a party which is friendly to the entrepreneurial ethos of business while at the same time it also presents itself in some senses as being on the side of ordinary people against effete elites who ought to know better but don't. To that extent I think that the Thatcher models are very much still with us.

TH: Danny Dorling has written that one can tell a lot more now about someone's class not from their employment status or occupation, but from the level of wealth in, say, the 10 or 12 people closest to them in familial terms. Does that seem right to you?

It's certainly true that one of the other achievements, if that's the right word, of Thatcher was to persuade people in Britain to stop thinking about themselves as producers, and to think about themselves instead as consumers and customers. If you think of yourself as a producer, it's what you earn and where you earn it and who your equivalent employment cohorts or groups are that matter. But if you think about yourself as a consumer, then it's how you spend, what you spend on, and who the people are you have most in common with in terms of how you spend it. I think that shift in the perception of British society, from a nation of producers to a nation of consumers is a very powerful one.

It is also, in a sense, an anti-class solidarity shift in perceptions, because while producers tend to be collective categories – at least they did in the old days of heavy industry – consumers tend to be single individuals. There was a wilful and determined effort on Thatcher's part to change the way we thought about who we are and about the society we belong to, and she was very successful at that.

TH: And a quite conscious effort...

I think there's no doubt that a large part of Thatcher's effort during her ten years as Prime Minister was to try to get British people to think about themselves and the society to which they belong in a different way, and a lot of

her speeches, especially her party conference speeches, were devoted to that endeavour. She was very successful at that and she knew exactly what she was doing, and her legacy, of how society is perceived and of how people see their own place in society, is one that New Labour has embraced as much as Cameron's Tories.

HJ: Is there any sense that New Labour can stand up to its claim to have moved beyond class?

I think that New Labour isn't clear, and hasn't been clear as a government, where it stands on class. Tony Blair is on record as saying that he doesn't believe in either the rhetoric or reality of class war, and I don't think Gordon Brown does either. So there's a sense in which Labour has given up on its traditional language of class solidarity and its language of class conflict. What it shouldn't have given up on is the concern about class as a short hand term for inequality, since inequality is still with us. I think what Labour hasn't managed to work out is how to sustain a non-Thatcherite language of class with a continued commitment to a concern about inequality, which is one of the things the Labour Party is for and Labour governments ought to be for.

TH: Why does language matter?

In one sense, class and the language of class is the way we think about the

world around us and our place in it. To that extent the language is important. If the language of class identity, of collective class identity, is driven off the agenda of public discussion, then it becomes quite hard to talk about something that nevertheless ought to be talked about, such as poverty, or inequality. It is very interesting that under Blair, and to some degree also under Brown, there hasn't been enough public discussion of the issue of inequality. I think that's regrettable.

Class and education:

TH: Is greater meritocracy what the left should be aiming for?

Meritocracy has always been difficult because not everybody is born with equal opportunities. I think the wish to give people equal life chances when they're born is a very admirable one but it's not entirely clear how you do it. I think education exactly speaks to that: witness the massive state funded programme of comprehensive schools from the 1960s on, which it was argued would give people as good an education as they could get if their parents paid fees to send them to public school. But we are now in a very different world, of city academies, which are an attempt to address the same problem by very different means. I suppose it would have been claimed of comprehensive schools that this was an attempt to produce a kind of state sponsored meritocracy; but that doesn't seem to have worked, and it's now being argued that academies are privately sponsored meritocracies. It's another attempt to deal with the same intractable issue, but in a very different way.

TH: Are there tools which could make secondary education a better driver for equal life chances, for greater opportunity?

I would like to hope that there are, but in the days when I was director of studies in history at Cambridge in my college, one of the things I always used to find most difficult was interviewing for admissions the people who had been to the appropriate public schools and had read all the books, were hugely confident, wrote well, and were

incredibly articulate on one side; and on the other side, people who came from inner city comprehensives, who had not been well taught, who had very few text books, who did not read much because they were not encouraged to do so, and who might have been filled with unrecognised talent but it was very hard to tell. What do you do under those circumstances? I never found it easy to decide.

Which leads to another question that I also can't answer: are universities enterprises in social engineering, or are they enterprises of higher education? Again, I don't think the answer to that is clear cut, and I say this with considerable feeling. I am the first member of my family to have gone to university so I am strongly in favour of giving everybody the sort of chances I was lucky enough to have. But how you devise a mechanism for giving people those chances that is both socially just and also academically credible? I have to say, I don't know, and I'm not sure anyone else really knows, either.

Class today:

TH: Thatcher and Blair both built alliances of class support, it's part of what drove them, but also they themselves both came from interesting backgrounds and in different ways were able to garner that support by being themselves. Might that be more difficult for David Cameron?

I suppose it might, but it certainly didn't seem difficult for Boris Johnson on the recent Mayoral election, who seemed to establish a rapport with a broad range of social groups in London without much difficulty. Another way of thinking about politicians, and I suppose it's slightly connected to class, is not so much that they belong to a particular party or a come from a particular educational background, but rather to think of them as being latter-day Roundheads and Cavaliers. I think that there may be a sense in which the London electorate had had enough of the Roundhead world of Ken Livingstone and actually found Boris's flamboyant and accident prone political incorrectness rather refreshing. Part of Boris's appeal is his raffish charm, and on the whole New Labour doesn't do raffish charm.

HJ: What is the kind of politics of class that can work for Brown? What's the language, what are some of the resonances?

Since he doesn't want to do the politics of class conflict or class envy, the politics of class that that ought to work for Brown, as it ought to work for any Labour government, is concern about those at the bottom end of the social and economic scale. They still ought to be a prime concern of any government of the left, and one of the things that so dismayed people about the 10p rate of income tax imbroglio was that it did not seem consistent with that historic area of concern that any government of the left ought to have. So the route for Gordon Brown to re-engage with these issues is to remind himself that he has always been personally committed to reduction in inequality, and he should return to engaging himself with that.

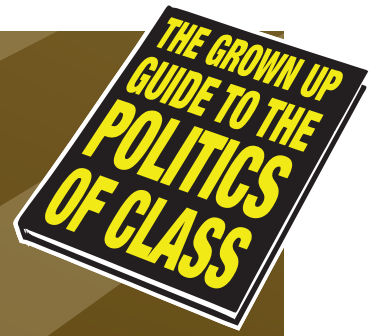
TH: And it's those at the bottom end rather than a broader narrative of fairness or opportunity for all?

The broader narrative of fairness for all and opportunity for all is one that has to be made plausible to those who are least likely to believe it. For people born with the least advantageous life chances, the narrative of fairness and opportunity is, by definition, more often a narrative of fiction than of reality, and that's something with which any Labour government ought to be concerned and engaged.

TH: But it wasn't concern for the bottom end that ensured Thatcher and Blair kept winning elections. It was a sense that there was a dynamic, energetic and competent government that was better than the Opposition

Well, that's a different question. Of course, Brown has to have a narrative before the next election which will appeal to a broader cross section of voters than just those at the lower end of the social spectrum who ought to be Labour's particular concern. At present, his narrative is that this is a hard period, we're getting through it, so stay with the people you can trust, and let's carry on. Whether that will turn out to be a vote winning narrative in 2010 we don't yet know. I'm a historian, I don't do the future.

CASH



HOW TODAY'S BRITISH CLASS SYSTEM IS ALL ABOUT MONEY

The British elite once worked hard to keep class and money separate. That has all changed, says social geographer Danny Dorling.



Danny Dorling works with the Social and Spatial Inequalities Group (SASI) in the Department of Geography, University of Sheffield

There was once an age when class came with breeding. One's parents gave one one's position. One might stray a little above or below (a perfect marital match is never possible), but one knew one's place.

Then for much of the last century class was about occupation – you only had to ask someone his or her job and you felt you knew almost everything you needed to know about them. But in 2008 that is no longer true. The 50 per cent of the British people who can just about pay the bills, but who

should not even imagine paying inheritance tax, have a huge range of occupations, just as those above and below them do. These middle class families tend to have two jobs (the British norm), two cars (the norm), a small semi-detached or large terraced house, a combined income that pays the mortgage, food, fuel and a couple of holidays a year, (one of them somewhere warm). Nowadays, class is all about money.

In the 19th century, accent, clothing, title and behaviour reflected our origins. There were schools for all classes: the



Great Schools for those destined for greatness, and a multitude of not-so-great schools – mostly created or expanded under Victoria’s reign – catering for the children of different strata of the new middle classes. You could tell whether a family was upper-middle, middle-middle, or lower-middle class from the school their children attended.

The working classes had their day schools, Sunday schools, church schools and elementary schools. You could also tell their class from the street they inhabited. Charles Booth had maps of London beautifully coloured – you could see the subtle differentiation between all the areas not shaded golden yellow, the colour of the servant-keeping classes. You could also see those areas shaded black and labelled ‘vicious, semi-criminal, poor’.

Mrs Beeton wrote a book on household management that sold well in those days. It turns out she only had one servant, but she did a good job of pretending to have more. Her book sold well because of a popular demand for information on how to act up to the class you wished to be. Just like Nigella Lawson today, she provided the fantasy that you too could appear to come from a stable above, be of better stock and be more respectable.

We used to have popular guides to the British class system that told you how to appear just a slight cut above. But in 2008 those at the top have to try to appear like the rest, chummy and normal. This year women had to be told they must wear knickers to enter the Royal Enclosure at Royal Ascot. How did we get here from there?

It was a slow change through the 20th century. The decimation of the sons of the Great Schools in the 1914-1918 war, the ‘gifting’ of stately homes to what is now the National Trust, the collapse of the financial might of the upper class through the 1920s and 1930s, and a progressive tax regime that lasted from the end of the Second World War until the beginning of Thatcherism – all these things changed what

class meant. Whereas under Victoria secondary schools had been designed to segregate the middle class, the 1944 Education Act split up the working class. It had the side effect of creating a one-off generation selected at 11 by what was called an ability test, a few of whom later got good jobs in universities and mused about class. They were almost all boys, as the 11-plus tests had been made easier for boys.

Unsurprisingly, these grammar school boys, with occupations their fathers had often not heard of, came to think of occupation and job title as very important. They designed class systems based on men’s occupations. Occupation was seen as a proxy for behaviour, for leisure pursuits, for taste, for class. Under this system the university lecturer from humble origins was equal to the don who did not need to draw his salary. Women fitted awkwardly into such schema.

Unfortunately, classification based on occupation came to predict some behaviour less well over time. Almost from the moment when the occupations were grouped, people started voting less and less reliably by occupational class. They took longer to stop behaving so predictably in lifestyle, partly because health outcomes have long antecedents, but premature mortality too has become recently a little less predictable by class.

Have we become a more classless society? It doesn’t feel quite like that to me. What I think has shifted is how we know what class we are in.

Give someone a fancy job title today and it may not mean quite as much as it did a few decades ago. You know what ‘general manager for the horizontal arrangement of goods for sale’ means, and what is being stacked where. Similarly two jobs can have the same title but be very different things. Different Members of Parliament, for instance, have very different lifestyles and differing levels of income and wealth.

Now there are better ways to gauge class. Tell me where you went to school, what your father’s job was then, and your home postcode now and I’ll quite happily put you in a pigeon hole. It still helps to know your job title, but I’m not that bothered about it. I’d be much more interested in your financial situation and that of your wider family. How many millions do you and your siblings, cousins, parents, grandparents and offspring collectively have recourse to if it were pooled? I know you’d never pool it. But it is access to just a little bit of that pool which often makes the difference between what happens to families when folk get divorced, lose a job, become sick, need a deposit or some other underwriting.

Your class is your family wealth. For many people that wealth is zero or less. If you cannot save £10 a month and take an annual holiday you are most probably poor. If you cannot do those things, and know you are poor, and you have a low income, then you are approaching another class below. Not an underclass – there really is no such thing as a group destined for the bottom due to some fallibilities they have. The very poor are, instead, those whose dream is that their greatest worry is that they cannot save £10 a month or take a holiday once a year. Roughly a quarter of people are poor, including about a tenth of the population who are very poor.

Above the poor in Britain are a group who have been squeezed in number in recent years: those who are neither wealthy nor poor. These are people who are socially included. They can partake in the norms of society. They are normal. If you are normal you can pay for the schools trips,

and a holiday, but not for the holiday in Mauritius. You are getting by, but not comfortably. You are in a shrinking middle group, and any time right about now you will be in a minority. Today you make up 50 per cent of UK households. Across Britain – outside of London – most people are still normal but that normality ranges itself from living a whisker above poverty to a whisker below the wealthy.

The wealthy are the 25 per cent of the population who do have some (little) cause to worry about paying inheritance tax. Only a third of this group ends up paying it, but they almost all worry about it. You are in this group if your estate were to be liable for that tax should you and your spouse simultaneously drop dead today. Don't forget to count those life insurance policies, or the writing off of the mortgage, or that death-in-service lump sum. But don't worry: most people like you will manage to spend your wealth in old age long before you have a chance to pass much of it on. The odds are that you are also partaking in most of the norms of society. Most people in this group choose not to use private health and education provision. If they did, other luxuries would have to be forgone.

Within the wealthy are a group who routinely do exclude themselves from the norms of society. They make up just around 5 per cent of us.

However, within the wealthy are a group who routinely do exclude themselves from the norms of society: for ease of remembering we'll call them the exclusive rich. They make up just around 5 per cent of us.

What sets the exclusive rich apart from the rest is not their use of private provision, but their large properties, multiple foreign holidays coupled with the outright purchase of new cars. You need to be doing about two out of three of those things, while preferably also having a six-figure household income to be up with these Joneses.

There is a national fixation with this group, and enough written on them to sell a month of Sunday newspapers. So all I'll say here is that they are fractal in nature. Within the best-off 5 per cent half are so much better off than the rest that they make the other half feel poor. Within that better off half, half are so much better off than... it's a recursive definition. It ends with the poor sods at the top paranoid about being kidnapped and knowing that their children and lovers lie to them for their wealth and suspecting their servants of pilfering.

This is our wealth-based British class system today. It is a 25-50-25 division, the edges of which can be shaved off to almost infinite layers of abstraction.

It may sound crude, but money is. Airs and graces no longer matter. In fact it's crucial to try to avoid them regardless of which end of the scale you are from. Dress down if you might otherwise look like a 'toff', take off that tie, unclip that accent. Dress up if you come from more dour stock: sensible suits, a neat hair cut, hold your knife and fork right. All the old markers of class fade as, for men, a ubiquitous 'bloke' is created, and women have to look 'smart'.

We can all still see the signs though. Those brown leather shoes that only men from certain (Great) schools

still wear, that fake handbag that only women not quite au fait would carry... but the signs matter less and less.

Those whose occupations are labelled 'working class' still have a predilection to vote Labour more than their generally lower incomes would suggest, but I suspect this has as much to do with lower wider family wealth and a realisation of which party still works slightly more in the interests of those without wealth, than their occupations being a marker for lower selfishness/aspiration.

The comedian Rosanne Barr once said of Americans that they were all middle class until the man came to turn the electricity off. It should not be like this. It is not nearly as bad in most of the rest of OECD countries. But this is where we have arrived. However, unlike the United States, we are a little less comfortable saying so.

The very least we should do, if we even want to understand our changed social world, is to know it. In Britain we best know places through a mechanism even older than the Victorian class system: we take a census. As society changes we change the questions on that census. When people started to get hot running water we asked if they had it. When almost everyone had it we stopped asking (similarly over inside toilets, over cars, over occupations). It took a riot or two before we asked about ethnicity. It took Parliament to insist that in 2001 we ask about religion.

In 2011, unless Parliament again intervenes, the census will again fail to ask about income. This means, in effect, we will not be asking about class.

An income question is asked in the United States census, it is asked in censuses and surveys across Europe, it may even be asked in the 2011 census in Scotland, but it is not set to be asked in 2011 in England and Wales.

There must be a civil servant living in a 1950s fantasy land somewhere who thinks that it is of some great use to know that a person's job label is 'Manager'. We're only getting useful information when we know that they are a manager and that the income of their household is roughly £40k, and that only one adult in their family works.

Income is not being asked about in the 2011 census not because of any real fears of asking the question or because some folk might complain. It is not being asked about because we are afraid of what we will be told and of what kind of a segregated country we will see.

Sometime soon, the proposed 2011 census questionnaires will be laid before Parliament. Parliament decides whether to accept what the civil servants propose. Parliament altered the 2001 form – Parliament could alter it again. Don't you want to know what Charles Booth's maps would look like if re-drawn today?

Danny Dorling is the author, with Bethan Thomas, of 'Identity in Britain: A cradle-to-grave atlas' published by Policy Press in 2007. He is also an author, with colleagues, of the 'Real World Atlas' and 'The Grim Reaper's Roadmap' Both are to be published in autumn 2008.

FOUR MANIFESTO POLICIES ON CLASS

**FREE
SCHOOL
MEALS
FOR ALL CHILDREN**
Sharon Hodgson MP

THE SCHOOL CANTEEN might be a familiar setting for a food fight but the corridors of power are not. That is why I think my proposal to introduce free school meals is beginning to cause a stir. It wouldn't be as cheap as chips but serving up a free healthy lunch in every school would bring benefits to the nation's collective health, educational attainment and environmental credentials. This is a recipe for successful policy which would go down well across the country.

According to recent headlines the rising cost of food is set to push the price of a school meal to over £2. For the parents of the average 2.4 children this adds up to a bill of over £80 a month. All parents are feeling the pinch and universal free school meals would ease the pressure on purse strings at home and, eventually, in the Treasury. Like all the best progressive policies it would be a helping hand to the many and a lifeline for the few.

A ready meal is a ready meal whether it comes from the shelves of Morrisons or Marks and Spencer. Fats and salt won't discriminate between the heart of a bricklayer or a barrister. The chance to influence the eating habits of all children is one not to be missed.

There is a growing body of evidence to show that it will work. A report into a pilot scheme in Hull details the positive impact that 'Eat Well, Do Well' had before it was scrapped by the Liberal Democrat council. Elsewhere pilots have been carried out in North Tyneside and Scotland, but the strongest case in point I have seen is Sweden. I visited schools there shortly after my election in 2005 and was inspired by what I saw. Lunch was an integral part of the curriculum with all children eating a healthy meal alongside their teachers.

Packed lunches are often used as a cheap alternative to school meals but there is no control over their quality. So why not have school dinner staff offer healthy packed lunches too? These lunches could be sourced locally, cutting down on the carbon footprint of the school community.

Fast food joints are a tempting

alternative to school food for many teenagers, with an average secondary school pupil having 23 outlets to choose from. A robust stay on site policy in every school would leave little scope for the junk food fix.

Regardless of the class of the classroom free school meals will help set all of our children up for a healthier future, and leave parents in less of a pickle when it comes to providing an affordable, nutritious lunchtime meal for their kids. We must connect the long term with the everyday if we are to renegotiate our contract with the public.

Introducing universal free school meals would be an example of the kind of big, bold thinking which Labour needs to demonstrate if it is to secure a fourth term. The long term benefits are clear to see but most importantly the impact on families would be immediate.



DROP THE WORD 'CHAV'

IT MIGHT BE hard to say this without sounding priggish or being accused of being rather more politically correct than is healthy, but here goes... We have to stop using the word 'chav'.

Would I get away with saying 'faggot' on the BBC? No – there are very few circumstances where that would be acceptable. Would the Guardian print the word 'pikey'? Well they have done five times this year (three times were earnest discussions about the word's racism, and the other two were, well, a bit racist). Can you use the word 'gay' as a general derogative (as in 'those are really gay trainers') on Radio 1? Well yes, it turns out that you can, according to the BBC Trust. Could I use the word 'n*****' in the Fabian Review? Well probably not, especially when making the point that there is rightly a hierarchy of offensiveness. Some uses of some words fall below the threshold of acceptability and some are definitely above it.

'Chav' is way above that threshold. It is deeply offensive to a largely voiceless group and – especially when used in normal middle-class conversation or on national TV – it betrays a deep and revealing level of class hatred.

The phenomenon of the word has grown over the last five years. Initially it was purely a term of abuse. (You only have to visit the website chavscum.com to see this – have a look at it and be appalled.) But more recently it has become rather more insidious than that because it is so much more widely used. I have heard it increasingly used in conversation



over the last year, invariably to casually describe people 'not like us' and very often used by people who are otherwise rather progressive in their politics.

You cannot consider yourself of the left and use the word. It is sneering and patronising and – perhaps most dangerous – it is distancing, turning the 'chav' into the kind of feral beast that exists only in tabloid headlines. The middle classes have always used language to distinguish themselves from those a few rungs below them on the ladder – we all know their old serviette/napkin, lounge/living room, settee/sofa tricks. But this is something new. This is middle class hatred of the white working class, pure and simple.

Part of the problem is about voice. When Little Britain, Graham Norton, and Jonathan Ross are given the BBC's green

light to portray gay people in ways that many gay people are uncomfortable with, we do at least have Stonewall to defend us (see their excellent 'Tuned Out' report from last year). But who does the white working class have? You might think they would at least have the progressive left, but it would seem not.

The BBC should specify the word in its guidelines for programme makers and take class discrimination seriously. The new Commission for Equality and Human Rights should show that they understand class discrimination is an issue that can have effects as detrimental as racial or gender bias.

But more importantly, we must stop using it ourselves. From now on – embarrassingly PC though it may seem – I shall audibly 'tut tut' and wince whenever I hear it used. You should too.

**WAITERS
MUST GET THE
TIPS
WE GIVE THEM**
Jemima Olchawski

THROUGHOUT MY TEENAGE years and early twenties I had many jobs as a waitress, in a number of different restaurants. Sometimes fun, with friendly customers, plenty of staff camaraderie and after-work drinks, other times gruelling with hot hours spent in a nasty uniform trying not to look embarrassed as I handed over another over-cooked/overpriced/much delayed by a fight between the chefs, pizza. Part of what drew me to these jobs was the tips – by smiling, being helpful and pandering to odd food requests I could significantly increase the amount I took home at the end of a ten hour shift thanks to the generosity of some of those I waited on. Lucky, since these jobs usually had pretty low hourly rates.

But I was furious when I realised the last restaurant I worked in not only paid a low hourly rate but actually took money from my tips as a top up to the minimum wage.

It was manifestly unfair, I had worked hard and been rewarded for my efforts. What's more the money had been given in good faith by customers who believed it would go to me, not to directly subsidise my employer and save a large restaurant chain a few quid. But my complaints to management fell on deaf ears – the practice is entirely legal and widespread in the hospitality industry.

To take this on The Daily Mirror and Unite the Union are running a 'Fair Tips Charter' to make sure tips reach the people they are meant for. It's a good campaign

and some of the big restaurant chains have already signed up.

But I notice my old employers have yet to put their name to it. Many of the people I worked with were living on very low incomes; they were recent immigrants uncertain of their rights or working mums who could not afford to risk losing their jobs by kicking up a fuss. This is a matter of basic fairness, often affecting vulnerable workers. It is too important to be left to corporate social responsibility alone.

Of course regulation is not always the right way to deal with all employer-employee issues. The government has introduced a right to request flexible working, which acknowledges that organisations just might not be able to accommodate a specific request. There are plenty of circumstances where it is legitimate to refuse.

But the issue of tips is not like that, what legitimate business reason is there for an employer withholding tips from their staff? It's pretty hard to imagine one; many of my old co-workers were the working poor for whom the deductions were making all the difference to their weekly budgets. If a café or restaurant owner claims that they need to keep their staff's

tips to keep the business afloat, then near-by neighbours who want to do the right thing face unfair competition. I very much doubt there are many from the hospitality industry who want to go on the radio and argue the case for continuing with the status quo.

So let's change the law and wipe the practice out completely so that all employees get all the money they worked so hard to earn, regardless of how good or bad their employer is.

A move to make this practice illegal would be politically popular too. It taps into the basic sense of fairness and decent treatment that made the minimum wage so popular even amongst those who do not directly benefit from it. It would remind people what a Labour government is for and of the limits of Cameron's calls for business and individuals to take responsibility for making Britain fairer without the support of government. And, like the minimum wage, it is a social justice issue that doesn't require an expensive taxpayer-funded programme. What's not to like?

Jemima Olchawski is Events Director at the Fabian Society



CHOOSING YOUR HOME FAIRLY

Nick Raynsford MP

THE WAYS THAT tenants are allocated social housing matter. Get it right and people feel a commitment to a home that they have chosen for themselves; get it wrong and people feel disillusioned and disenfranchised. Gone are the days when it was acceptable to offer a 'one size fits all' service. In an era when people are increasingly conscious of their ability to exercise choice in every other aspect of their lives, and are well aware of the efforts that many businesses make to win their custom, it is simply untenable for public services to be offered on a 'take it or leave it' basis which pays no regard to the service users' preferences or aspirations.

Personalising the process is crucial. It means we need to see continuous improvement and responsiveness to the public and it means local authorities learning from each other – the best are currently much better than the others. In some areas prospective tenants simply go to a local Housing Centre where you will be sat down and asked what you're looking for, in much the same way as in an estate agent. Some areas with low supply of housing stock have teamed up with neighbouring authorities so they can give you a wider range of options. But in other areas the dynamic between the authority and the citizen is still very wrong, with applicants feeling patronised or herded around.

So we're not there yet, but we've come a long way. When I first proposed, as Housing Minister in 1999, the introduction of choice-based lettings the reaction from

most of the social housing world was one of suspicion and scepticism. At the best, I was told, it wouldn't work. At the worst the policy was seen as a threat to fairness and equality, undermining the basic principles of social housing.

This negative reaction was very much in line with the response of other public services to the concept of choice. In an unequal society, opponents argue, choice panders to the better off and reinforces social polarization. It also subverts the public service ethos, substituting consumerist attitudes which may work in a supermarket but have no place in a public authority.

In fact, the opposite was true. The old, usually points-based, housing allocation system reinforced social polarisation and undermined the public service ethos. The rules, designed with the best of intentions, were generally incomprehensible and fostered a confrontational relationship between applicants and providers. Few applicants understood – let alone believed in – the fairness of the allocation criteria, which left them feeling powerless and at the mercy of a bureaucratic process. Council staff also had to spend a disproportionate amount of time explaining to dissatisfied applicants why no offer was forthcoming. And when someone's name did make it to the top of the list they were usually presented with an offer out of the blue on a take-it-or-leave-it basis, reinforcing their sense of powerlessness and dependence. Not surprisingly those who did have any other options available, exercised their choice and walked away, leaving social housing as an increasingly residual and stigmatized service.

Choice-based lettings operate on the principle that applicants should not be passive recipients of a service, but should actively bid for properties for which they may be eligible. Needs are still taken into account, but in a simplified form, usually by applicants being assigned to one of three bands,

with highest priority being accorded to those with greater needs. The role of the staff changes from gate keeping to advising applicants on how to submit bids that are most likely to generate a positive outcome. This can be organised in such a way as to ensure that greater support is offered to those applicants least likely to be able to manage the process without help, so countering the criticism that the system would favour better organised applicants and disadvantage the vulnerable. Predictably, when people themselves have had a say in their choice of home, they are much more likely to accept an offer when it comes up. This has generally helped to speed up the time it takes to re-let vacant properties and to generate a greater sense of commitment on the part of new tenants to their new home.

But there is currently a serious issue with areas where there is not enough housing – where supply and demand are so out of kilter that very few applicants are likely to get an offer. Unsurprisingly, disillusionment can set in rapidly if people make successive bids without result. We must increase the supply of affordable social housing – indeed this is fundamental irrespective of the allocation system.

But despite supply constraints, the most progressive and imaginative local authorities have responded with measures to widen the net, including lettings by housing associations and approved private landlords, and by exploring options in neighbouring areas or even further afield.

Local authorities really can learn from each other – especially given that some have gone much further than others in personalising the service, ensuring a follow-up with applicants who have made a number of unsuccessful bids, advising them, for example, if changes in the type or location of property for which they are bidding might enhance their prospects. We need to spread good practice and those of us in progressive politics must keep pressing for change.

Due respect

Bringing young and old people together would generate solidarity and break down the stereotypes which block social justice between the generations, say **Jayanti Durai** and **Jerome Nollet**

Britain could do better for its young people. Over the past year or so, a wealth of statistics and reports has highlighted just how poor our international standing has become. Unicef ranks the UK as the worst place in the developed world to raise children. News magazines point to a country riddled with violent crime, teen pregnancy, heavy drinking and drug abuse. In June, the UK's Children's Commissioners reported the persistent inequalities faced by British children and young people to the UN. Stories about violent knife crimes appear in the papers with depressingly increasing regularity.

In this climate, it is hardly surprising that older people are becoming more and more suspicious of the young. Between 1992 and 2006, there was a 60 per cent increase in complaints from adults about teenagers 'hanging around' in their local area. The group that seems most afraid of this apparent epidemic of bad behaviour is our seniors, an astounding 92

per cent of whom now say that they fear young people. No wonder social capital in many urban areas is so low.

But it need not be this way. Our elders and our youth have more in common than they think – and bringing the two groups together offers a radical opportunity to improve society. This approach is already working across the country, but the projects are piecemeal. It is time to take it to a national level, where new kinds of intergenerational partnership could make a major difference to social capital, wellbeing, aspiration and optimism.

If we want to make a real difference to the lives of both young and old, we need to start by recognising the reality of young people's lives in modern Britain. It is not only older people who are wary of leaving their homes. The young themselves are increasingly the victims of crime – some 68 per cent of them say that they have feared for their own safety within the previous fortnight. In this climate, the appeal of gangs can seem obvious to some young people. As those working in youth mentoring know, gangs provide a community that is protective of its members.

The young are often looking for help and guidance in an increasingly confusing world. For all their apparent confidence, nearly 80 per cent of young people say they would value a community mentor, welcoming the opportunity to learn and recognising their own need for help.

At the same time, older people are desperate to come out of hiding. Many live isolated lives, feeling disrespected and unappreciated by the world around them. This group suffers from rising levels of loneliness and falling levels of wellbeing and, as the baby boomers retire in historically huge numbers, the problem is only likely to get worse.

Like the young people they fear, this retiring generation represents a major and untapped source of potential for society. Many older people want to take up a role in their communities, but complain of a lack of structure and facilitation. They want their voices heard and their potential contribution recognised, but too often they cannot find a route into doing anything about it.

The answer to these problems is

staring us in the face. Bringing old and young together in intergenerational partnerships offers young people the benefit of decades of experience and wisdom, while giving our eleven million elders a chance to socialise, help and serve.

While the different generations may be leading very different lives, both groups are experiencing age-related stereotyping and are equally likely to face social exclusion. Similarities between these generations extend to feelings of isolation, a lack of confidence, family breakdown and fear of crime. Intergenerational work enables us to respond to these issues by re-connecting fragmented groups through mutually beneficial activities which help to build more cohesive communities.

Intergenerational partnership schemes are already up and running across the country, ranging from programmes that encourage older people to read in schools to projects focusing on ICT, cookery and fully-fledged mentoring.

These schemes work. As one older participant in a mentoring scheme puts it: "I learned that the fears and concerns of the young people are the same as the older people and that they – the young – were able to understand and recognise the need for change and had good ideas."

Young people benefit from the schemes as well. One participant said that: "I feel like I can talk to older people and understand what they're going through. Before, I thought they were just people that didn't have much. But now I can really sit and talk to them and understand where they're coming from."

The Beth Johnson Foundation highlights clear evidence to suggest that mentoring benefits at-risk youth through enhanced self-esteem, improved school attendance, decreased involvement in offending or alcohol and drug misuse and improved school achievement. At the same time, the older volunteers also demonstrated improved well-being, self-esteem and engagement in other community activities.

The Government recognises the need for a radical change in the way that old and young relate to one another. Ivan Lewis, the minister for older people, recently called for



ideas to increase contact between the two groups. Beverly Hughes, the minister for children and young people, chaired a ministerial roundtable on intergenerational practice at the House of Commons and the Treasury has said that “mentoring can have a beneficial effect on young people in disadvantaged situations, such as young people growing up in poverty, with difficult family situations or with behavioural difficulties.”

But while ministers send encouraging signals, the Government has simply lacked the ambition to take the kind of radical steps that will genuinely address the problems of young and old. Ministers rely on ad hoc interventions and local initiatives at a time when the need for action is increasingly urgent.

We need to move beyond piecemeal change and start seeing intergenerational partnerships as a bold new social initiative that can help everyone contribute to healing the rifts in British society. To make a real difference, we need a national policy framework that will make new partnerships between young and old part of our social fabric.

This is how it could work:

- When you retire, get a pension or receive a bus pass – you would get sent a letter asking you briefly to describe yourself, your life experience and the jobs you have held. You would then be placed on the Youth-Elders Partnership

(YEP) register. Everyone would be approached to be on the register but it would be up to you to choose.

- Schools, youth offending teams, police, local councils, and NGOs such as Youth at Risk and Kids Company would raise awareness of the scheme among young people and would be qualified to match a young person with an older person from the register. Older people can be used to strengthen existing youth programmes or save on mentor recruitment costs.
- Brief introductory training for both sides would be included. After a couple of years of the scheme, the training could be carried out by ‘graduates’ - in other words, by those who have undergone the training and been a mentor.
- Ongoing support would be provided by the relevant matching agency.
- The older advisor would meet with their young person for around an hour on a regular basis for a year or so. The meetings would be in a neutral safe location. There is no pay, but travel and other expenses are reimbursed.
- Older advisor and the young person together decide what to do during their time together and what they want to achieve.
- Safe locations could be schools, community centres, museums,

companies, as well as of course young offender institutes. Ideally other services would also be available at some meeting places for young and older people.

Of course, there are challenges that need to be overcome if this scheme is going to deliver on its radical potential. Perhaps the young will not be interested – although our experience with youth mentoring programmes suggests otherwise. Perhaps older people will not answer the ‘call to arms’. Maybe the Government will be scared of ridicule, with headlines announcing the shift from ‘the nanny state to the granny state’. It is possible that intergenerational partnerships could fall foul of the experts, with the idea being derailed into years of piloting and study rather than action.

We know that there are still questions to be answered, but we also know that there will be a cost if we do not act. The risk lies in the Government failing to send a message of hope to communities, of failing to invest in projects and action that promise to close the social gaps and inequalities that decades of rising wealth have failed to address.

Jayanti Durai is a mentor for young people, a magistrate and advises companies on corporate social responsibility. Jerome Nollet works in the City of London and has studied the role of elders working with youngsters in Brazil, France and the US.



Tests of success

An academic analysis of the last decade doesn't answer the crucial question of how to fill in the New Labour scorecard, says **Peter Hyman**

As Labour crashed to defeat in the Crewe and Nantwich by-election, David Cameron pronounced New Labour dead. What was perhaps strange was that no member of the government rushed to give it the kiss of life.

Strange too, it is the conservatives who are its biggest fans. They have plagiarised the Labour party strategy for winning power, agreed to most of its policies, and attempted to plonk itself in the centre ground.

Most of all Cameron, and down-turned-statesman Boris Johnson, are the living embodiment of a new political settlement in this country, as Matt Beech who edits "Ten Years of New Labour" with Simon Lee, makes clear. Anyone serious about coming to power in Britain knows it is necessary to agree to serious funding of public services, Bank of England independence, devolution, a minimum wage, civil partnerships, diversity and choice in public services to name a few areas.

While the Tories slaver over New Labour, Labour itself is more ambiguous. Gordon Brown tried to distance himself from New Labour thinking that was what the public wanted when he took over. He has now rushed back to embrace most of its tenets in an attempt to recreate the successful coalition.

Some on the left breathed a sigh of relief (even cheered) when Blair resigned - Iraq having coloured their entire view of him - believing (wrongly) that now they would get the socialism they had longed for since 1997.

However, this collection of essays from the Centre for British Politics, which includes a foreword by Anthony Giddens, doyen of New Labour wonkery, Raymond Plant on Blair's liberal interventionism, Philip Norton on the "Office of Prime Minister" as well as contributions on social policy, defence, the unions, and Europe, marks perhaps the beginning

of the first wave of revisionism. This is not quite Blair the great Prime Minister, but at the very least it is Blair - he didn't do that badly.

For those who have had their fill of GB versus TB rows, financial imbroglis, or gossipy memoirs, this book may come as a blessed relief.

What is refreshing, is that most of the contributions lack the cynicism or bile of much recent media coverage and attempt to take the Blair years at face value rather than in a fevered post-Iraq haze. Many of the authors, though, cannot bring themselves to support his motives, rather - as in the case of Mark Evans' essay on the constitution - attributing any successes to "electoral despair" and "political pragmatism rather than idealism".

What becomes clear from the essays is that, whether fan or foe of Tony Blair, it is hard to deny there were some big ideas in his ten years in power. His doctrine of liberal interventionism, while leading to Iraq, in many people's view a great disaster, was an attempt to grapple with the post 9/11 world. Raymond Plant concludes his interesting essay on the subject by saying that in the end this doctrine amounts to little more than preserving national self-interest allied to a weak conception of international community.

As Zimbabwe demonstrates, moral outrage without sufficient clout behind it renders the international community powerless to intervene in a truly horrendous situation.

Tony Blair's belief that the monolithic public services of the 1945 settlement needed to become more entrepreneurial and responsive was surely right, even if not every policy that flowed from the insight was as well thought through. It is a bit surprising that this book does not have individual chapters on health, education, and crime given how central they were to New Labour's ten years in power.

A weakness of publishing a collection of symposium papers is that not enough is drawn together and some of the big reflective questions go unasked. We do have Simon Lee writing a wrap-up chapter though this concludes a touch lamely that Labour changed little from the Thatcherite

settlement, a verdict at odds with Matt Beech's chapter on Labour's dominance.

I am now a teacher and when I set a piece of work I give students the success criteria – so that they know what I am looking for when I mark it. What would the success criteria be for new Labour? This is where this book is ambiguous.

There are three possible success criteria I would use. First, did New Labour solve the major problems faced by the country? Second, Bill Clinton's test, were more people better off (in its widest sense) than at the start of the ten years? Third, the ideological question – is Britain more social democratic than ten years ago?

To answer the first question, New Labour did put right a lot of what it inherited. It has given away more power than any other government. Devolution and different voting systems have allowed the SNP to win in Scotland and the Conservatives in London, and Plaid Cymru to be part of the Welsh administration. Public services are up off their knees. The essay on public expenditure castigates Labour for not dealing well enough with income inequalities while admitting that Labour has targeted money effectively on health and education.

Are people better off? More are than not. Public servants are paid far more. All have benefited from low inflation and low mortgage rates – even if things are now getting much tougher. There are fewer victims of crime, and fewer living in poverty.

The ideological question is the one given most attention in the book with debates as to what the centre ground means, arguments about how liberal or social democratic Blair is, and a general belief that Labour should have been more radical. While Blair was never a social democrat in the traditional sense – combining liberal and social democratic strands – it is hard to argue against the thesis that the combination of policies on tax and spend, public services, tolerance towards minorities, has not shifted the centre of gravity of British politics substantially to the left.

So what are the lessons for Gordon Brown? My biggest piece of advice is to prioritise. This book shows how hyperactive the Blair government was. We did too much rather than too little.

I wish Gordon Brown would spend the majority of his time on two or three absolutely key areas of which education would be one – and try to make lasting and deep change.

The other lesson is how hard it was to build the coalition of support that resulted in 3 election victories, and how the left still has more enemies – in media, business, amongst its own – than the right. And that it will take a particularly skilful politician to maintain that coalition under pressure.

The first words of Giddens's foreword perhaps says it all: "Every left of centre party that gets into power is doomed to disappoint". All of us on the left, and those who were part of the government as much as those who weren't, ask the same questions:

"Could we have done more?", "Did we take our chances to reshape society".

Yet whatever the disappointments, New Labour still dominates British politics. The Tories are desperate to bury it, that's when they are not trying to copy it. Labour now realises more than ever New Labour's election winning potency and its ability to bind together middle and working class voters to deliver change.

No party has yet defined a post-Blair world with real clarity. That world is one in which green issues will be more important, politics and politicians will need to get closer to the people; and power, wealth and opportunity must be devolved and redistributed to give people more control over their lives. The party that understands these issues may well dominate politics as dramatically as New Labour has in the last ten years.

Peter Hyman was a political strategist to Tony Blair from 1994-2003. He is now a teacher in a London comprehensive.

Ten Years of
New Labour
Edited by
Matt Beech
and Simon Lee



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FABIAN QUIZ

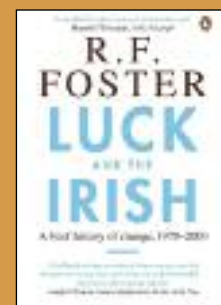
From 1970, things were changing in Ireland – the Celtic Tiger had finally woken, and the rules for everything from gender roles and religion to international relations were being entirely rewritten. **Luck and the Irish** examines how the country has weathered these last thirty years of change, and what these changes may mean in the long run. R. F. Foster also looks at how characters as diverse as Gerry Adams, Mary Robinson, Charles Haughey and Bob Geldof have contributed to Ireland's altered psyche, and uncovers some of the scandals, corruption and marketing masterminds that have transformed Ireland – and its luck.

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Where it all went wrong

Hillary Clinton loyalist Sidney Blumenthal is still fighting the battles of the 1990s, says

Ed Wallis

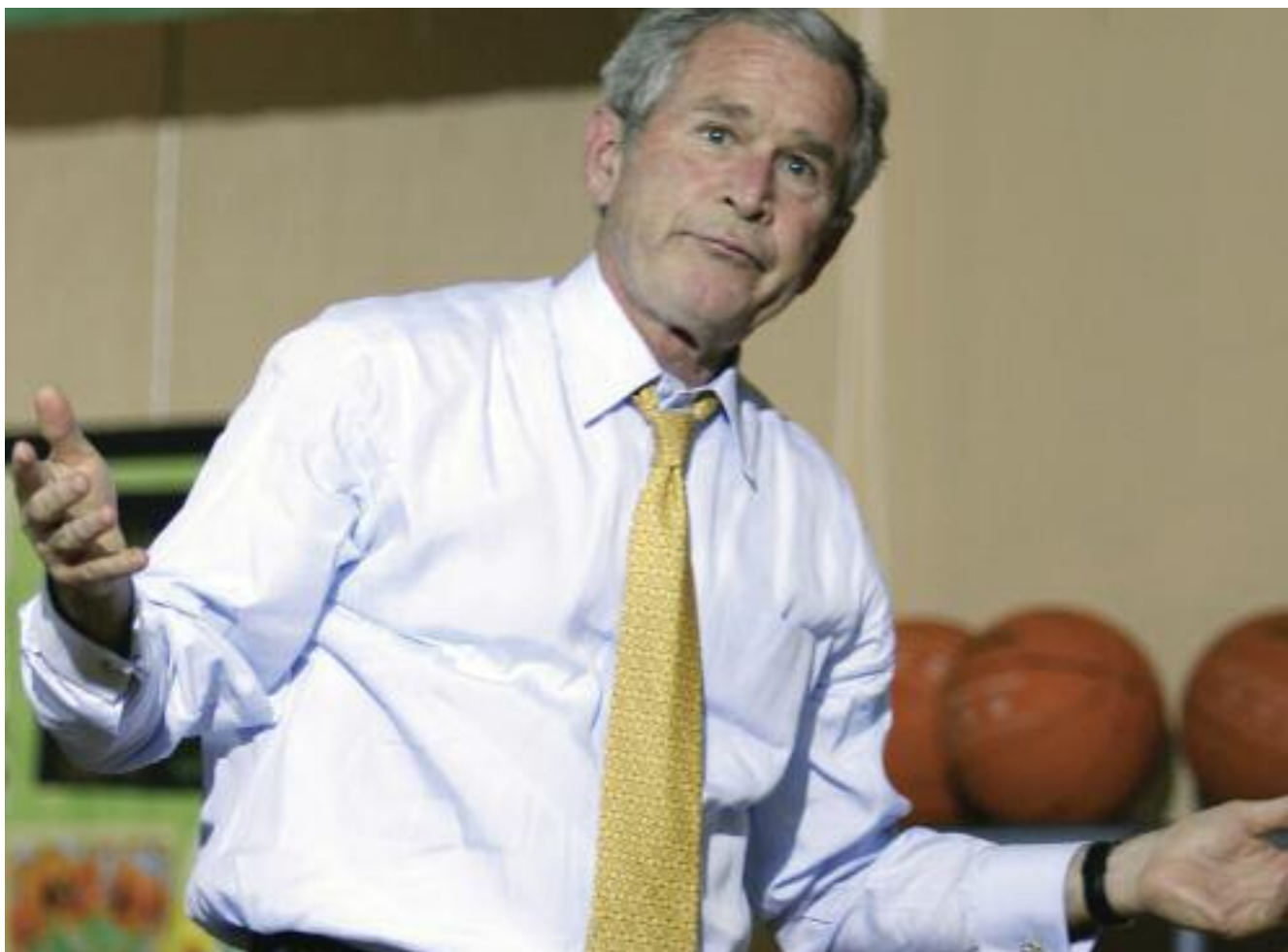
A lot can change in seven months. Sidney Blumenthal could hardly have predicted the recent rollercoaster of events in American politics when he wrote his final column for the Guardian, and US current affairs website, Salon.com at the end of 2007. But the protracted battle for the Democratic nomination hangs heavy over The Strange Death of Republican America. Blumenthal's position as one of the Clintons' premier attack dogs and cheerleaders is well documented. This fiercely loyal relationship has defined his career, having served in the Clinton White House where he bore the scars of the Lewinsky saga. Indeed, he was one of only four witnesses called to testify in the impeachment trial and is widely credited with coining the phrase "vast right wing conspiracy" to describe the president's tormentors.

Therefore it is often hard to disentangle the loyal advisor from the objective columnist. Take, for example, Blumenthal's last piece before he saddled up for battle as senior advisor to Hillary Clinton. Here he singles out former New York Mayor and then leading candidate for the Republican nomination Rudy Giuliani for having "embraced Bush's imperial presidency" and draws attention to his failure to challenge Hillary Clinton for the

vacant New York Senate seat in 2000, none too subtly setting up the fault-lines for what he expected to be the presidential showdown in 2008. This was all, of course, before Giuliani embarked on the most ill-advised campaign strategy in living memory and Clinton was overwhelmed by the Obama phenomenon.

Context is everything; and it is fair to say that events have somewhat undermined the final installment of Sidney Blumenthal's strident critique of the Republican Party. Which is a shame, because Blumenthal has a compelling story to tell of the Bush era. Bush, Blumenthal argues, represents the climax of a movement thirty years in the making. Its roots lie in Nixon's "Southern Strategy," which exploited the tensions of the civil rights movement to provide the Republicans with a new electoral base. Once in power, Nixon was "author of the project for an imperial presidency...to create an unaccountable executive and harness the federal government into a political machine." This "imperial presidency" provided the model for the Bush administration, directed by Vice President Dick Cheney and key strategist, Karl Rove, and facilitated by the post-9/11 "war paradigm," which saw that "the president in his wartime capacity as commander-in-chief makes and enforces laws as he sees fit, overriding the constitutional system of checks and balances." Frightening examples abound as to the scale of the project to create an unfettered executive. Under questioning at a Senate hearing, an assistant attorney general states "the president is always right." As Blumenthal explains, he "meant more than that Bush personally is 'always right.' He had condensed into a phrase the legal theory of presidential infallibility." The book shines particular light on Dick Cheney, the administration's beating heart of darkness. Cheney is a master of backroom bureaucracy, expert in presenting deeply ideological policies to a uniquely uncurious president as faits accomplis. Cheney goes to extraordinary lengths to avoid scrutiny: his thirst for secrecy leads him to refuse to provide documents for the National Archives, unsuccessfully attempt to abolish said agency, and then declare that the vice president is not "an entity within the

executive branch" thereby absolving him of the responsibility to provide public record. But Blumenthal the loyal advisor relates the Republican fall from grace with a breathless glee that sometimes gets the better of him. This is particularly the case when reporting the resignation scandal of Mark Foley, a Republican congressman who sent homo-erotic emails to his young interns. Salacious excerpts from Foley's missives run through Blumenthal's article, unnecessarily cheapening what is otherwise a powerful attack on high-level Republican hypocrisy: Foley made a name for himself legislating on child protection, and had recently sponsored a bill to protect children from online sex predators. Overall, as an erudite piece of deeply partisan contemporary history, Blumenthal's reportage works well. And although often covering well trodden ground in the crowded Bush-baiting market, the wealth of insights into the Bush administration's malfeasance makes this collection worthwhile. However, in its wider conclusions the book begins to hit the skids. For Blumenthal, the Bush administration lacked legitimacy for the radical course on which it embarked, having failed to win the popular vote in 2000, only securing electoral college victory following legal wrangling in Florida, and then only gaining reelection on the back of 9/11. With Bush's incompetence exposed over Iraq and Hurricane Katrina, and further undermined by a series of scandals highlighting Republican hypocrisy and secrecy, voters turn away in the mid-term elections of 2006 and deliver Congress to the Democrats. These mid-terms, and the victory of Jim Webb in the Senate race in Virginia in particular, ratify "the repudiation of President Bush and his policies, especially in the Iraq war" and "contain the makings of a further realignment of American politics." But it is doubtful that they represent any such thing. In the 2006 mid-term elections, the Democrats did not offer the American public a starkly different worldview, narrative or policy platform to their Republican challengers. This election was still conducted on solidly Republican terms – national security, social values, tax cuts – but with the Republican incumbents tarnished by



scandal and incompetence at home and catastrophe abroad. The successful Democrats were those that looked most like their Republican counterparts but without the toxic label – the so-called Blue Dogs. And Jim Webb, the poster boy for Blumenthal's realignment, is a former Republican (Reagan's secretary of the navy no less) and now a conservative Democrat for whom Virginians could comfortably vote. As a hook to hang a realignment thesis on it is slight to say the least. A stinging rebuke to the Bush administration? Yes. A fundamental change in the game? Not yet.

And in the cold light of post-Obama politics, it is ironic that Blumenthal's recent behaviour has been dedicated to trying to halt someone who just might deliver the new paradigm that these columns long for. Obama will surely be knocked off his lofty pedestal in due course: indeed his justifiable but hypocritical decision to opt out of public election funding, breaking a primary campaign pledge not to do so, raises

questions over his ability to deliver on his promise of a "new politics." But he does offer a break from the bloody partisan wars which have so defined politics during Blumenthal's career. Blumenthal, on the other hand, has learnt through bitter experience, and the Democrat's success in 2006, that if you can't beat 'em, join 'em. And, hence, Roveian tactics were evident in the Clinton campaign, whose combative approach to questioning Obama's electability, religious associations and political connections borrowed much from the Republican playbook. Blumenthal consistently bemoans Karl Rove's dismissal of the political centre and ruthless stigmatizing of the opposition: but the Clinton campaign's attempt to ghettoise Obama as the black candidate, fear mongering of an RFK-like assassination, and the infamous "red phone" advert preying on post-9/11 security fears, all pursue the same model.

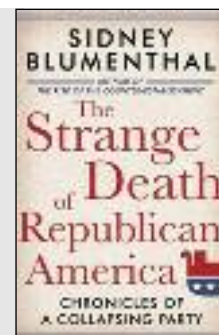
Blumenthal has been accused on the blogosphere of distributing and

giving kudos to some of the more scurrilous rumours about Obama that have been circulating throughout the campaign. By climbing down into the mud pit, Blumenthal has joined those who may well jeopardise the best hope of laying Republican America to rest once and for all.

Ed Wallis is Events Manager at the Fabian Society. Listen to an extract of Sidney Blumenthal's conversation with Jonathan Freedland at www.fabians.org.uk

The Strange Death of Republican America
Sidney Blumenthal

£14.99
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Listings

BATH

Regular meetings – new members welcome.
 ●Details and information from Paul Thomas on 01761 438924 email twmthomas@hotmail.co.uk

BIRMINGHAM

For details and information contact Andrew Coulson on 0121 414 4966 email a.c.coulson@bham.ac.uk or Rosa Birch on 0121 426 4505 or rosabirch@hotmail.co.uk

BOURNEMOUTH & DISTRICT

31 October. Barbara Follett MP
28 November. Janice Hurne, PPC for Bournemouth West. 'Mitigating the Effects of Climate Change: are Community Driven Local Initiatives the Answer?'
30 January. Fiona MacTaggart MP
27 February. Baroness Estelle Morris.
 ●All meetings at The Friends Meeting House, Wharnclyffe Rd, Boscombe, Bournemouth at 7.30.
 ●Contact Ian Taylor on 01202 396634 for details.

BRIGHTON & HOVE

25 July. Sue John from SEEDA on 'Making the Most of 2012' Meetings 8.00 at Friends Meeting House, Ship Street, Brighton
 ●Details from Maire McQueeney on 01273 607910 email mairemcqueeney@waitrose.com

BRISTOL

Society re-forming.
 ●For details contact Dave Johnson on tessandave2004@aol.com

CANTERBURY

New Society forming.
 ●Please contact Ian Leslie on 01227 265570 or 07973 681 451 or email i.leslie@btinternet.com

CARDIFF

●Details of all meetings from Steve Tarbet on 02920 591 458 or stevetarbet@talktalk.net

CENTRAL LONDON

Regular meetings at 7.30 in the Cole Room, 11 Dartmouth Street, London SW1A 9BN
 ●Details from Ian Leslie on 01227 265570 or 07973 681451

CHELMSFORD AND MID ESSEX

New Society forming.
 ●For details of membership and future events, please contact Barrie Wickerson on 01277 824452 email barrieew@laterre.wanadoo.co.uk

CHESHIRE

New Society forming in Northwich area.
 ●Contact Mandy Griffiths on mgriffiths@valeroyal.gov.uk

CHISWICK & WEST LONDON

●Details from Monty Bogard on 0208 994 1780, email mb0141f362@blueyonder.co.uk

CITY OF LONDON

●For details contact Richard Briggs on dearrichardbriggs@hotmail.com

COLCHESTER

●Details from John Wood on 01206 212100 or woodj@fish.co.uk

CORNWALL

Helston area. New society forming.
 ●For details contact Maria Tierney at maria@disabilitycornwall.org.uk

DARTFORD & GRAVESHAM

30 July. Dr Ian Gibson MP on 'Winning a 4th term for Labour'
 ●Meeting at 8.00 at the Chequers, Darenth Road South at 8.00.
 ●Details from Deborah Stoate on 0207 227 4904 email debstoate@hotmail.com

DERBY

Regular monthly meetings.
 ●Details from Rosemary Key on 01332 573169

DONCASTER AND DISTRICT

New Society forming
 ●For details and information contact Kevin Rodgers on 07962 019168 email k.t.rodgers@gmail.com

EAST LOTHIAN

3 August. Annual Summer Garden Party
 ●Details of all meetings from Noel Foy on 01620 824386 email noel.foy@tesco.net

FINCHLEY

●If you're interested in joining this new Society, please contact Brian Watkins on 0208 346 6922 email brian.watkins60@ntlworld.com

GLASGOW

Now holding regular meetings.
 ●Contact Martin Hutchinson on mail@liathach.net

GLOUCESTER

●Regular meetings at TGWU, 1 Pullman Court, Great Western Rd, Gloucester.
 ●Details from Roy Ansley on 01452 713094 email roybrendachd@yahoo.co.uk

HARROW

Regular monthly meetings
 ●Details from John Solomon on 020 8428 2623. Fabians from other areas where there are no local Fabian Societies are very welcome to join us.

HAVERING

23 July. Dave Wetzl on 'Annual Land Value Tax' 7.30 in Roope Hall, Station RD, Upminster
 ●Details of all meetings from David Marshall email david.c.marshall.t21@btinternet.com

HERTFORDSHIRE

Regular meetings.
 ●Details from Robin Cherney at RCher24@aol.com

HUDDERSFIELD AREA

New society forming.
 ●Contact Jo Coles at jcoles@yahoo.com if you are interested.

ISLINGTON

25 June. Debate on Nuclear Power 8.00 at Islington Town Hall
23 July. John Foster
14 December. Annual Dinner. Lord Alf Dubs. Tickets, details etc from Pat Haynes.
 ●Contact Pat Haynes on 0207 249 3679

MANCHESTER

●Details from Graham Whitham on 079176 44435 email manchesterfabians@googlemail.com and a blog at http://grtrmancfabians.blogspot.com

MARCHES

New Society formed in Shrewsbury area. Details on www.MarchesFabians.org.uk
 ●Contact Kay Thornton on Secretary@marchesfabians.org.uk

MIDDLESBOROUGH

New Society hoping to get established.
 ●Please contact Andrew Maloney on 07757 952784 or email andrewmaloney@hotmail.co.uk for details

NEWHAM

●For details of meetings, contact Anita Pollack on 0208 471 1637 or Anita_Pollack@btopenworld.com

NORTH EAST WALES

●Further details from Joe Wilson on 01978 352820

NORTHUMBRIA AREA

3 October. Sir Jeremy Beecham on 'Whiter Labour?' followed by supper at Close House Country Club, Wylam.
 ●For details cand booking contact Pat Hobson at pat.hobson@hotmail.com

NORWICH

Anyone interested in helping to re-form Norwich Fabian Society
 ●Please contact Andreas Paterson andreas@headswitch.co.uk

PETERBOROUGH

●Meetings at 8.00 at the Ramada Hotel, Thorpe Meadows, Peterborough.
 ●Details from Brian Keegan on 01733 265769, email brian@briankeegan.demon.co.uk

PORTSMOUTH

Regular monthly meetings
 ●Details from June Clarkson on 02392 874293 email jclarkson1006@hotmail.com

READING & DISTRICT

●For details of all meetings, contact Tony Skuse on 0118 978 5829 email tony@skuse.net

SHEFFIELD

●Regular meetings on the 4th Thursday of the month, 7.30 at the Quaker Meeting Room, 10 St James Street, Sheffield S1
 ●Details and information from Rob Murray on 0114 2558341 or Tony Ellingham on 0114 274 5814 email tony.ellingham@virgin.net

SOUTH EAST LONDON

Meet at 8.00 at 105 Court Lane, Dulwich London SE21 7EE
 ●For details of these and all future meetings, please visit our website at http://mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk/selfs/ Regular meetings, contact Duncan Bowie on 020 8693 2709

SOUTHAMPTON AREA

12 September. Ben Steinberg on 'The Good Society'
9 October. Dr Bryan Jones on 'Iran and the Nuclear Issue.
 ●Details and directions from Frank Billett on 023 8077 9536

SOUTH TYNESIDE

●For information about this Society please contact Paul Freeman on 0191 5367 633 or at freemanpsmb@blueyonder.co.uk

SUFFOLK

4 September. Anne Campbell, Chair, Fabian Society
23 October Rt Hon Denis MacShane MP on 'Labour in Europe and the World'
13 November. Susan Mason and David Chapman on 'Fabian Policy and Electoral Reform'
19 February. Sunder Katwala
 Details of all meetings from Peter Coghill on 01986 873203
 ●For details contact Sally Cook at mikeck@onetel.com

SURREY

27 July. Annual Garden Party. Dr Howard Stoate MP on 'Challenging the Citadel'. Details of this event from Maureen Swage
 ●Regular meetings at Guildford Cathedral Education Centre.
 ●Details from Maureen Swage on 01252 733481 or maureen.swage@btinternet.com

TONBRIDGE AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS

All meetings at 8.00 at 71a St Johns Rd.
 ●Details from John Champneys on 01892 523429

TYNEMOUTH

Monthly supper meetings
 ●Details from Brian Flood on 0191 258 3949

WATERSHED

A new Local Society in the Rugby area.
 ●Details from Mike Howkins email mgh@dnu.ac.uk or J David Morgan on 07789 485621 email jdavidmorgan@excite.com
 ●All meetings at 7.30 at the Indian Centre, Edward Street Rugby CV21 2EZ.
 ●For further information contact David Morgan on 01788 553277 email jdavidmorgan@excite.com

WEST DURHAM

The West Durham Fabian Society welcomes new members from all areas of the North East not served by other Fabian Societies. It has a regular programme of speakers from the public, community and voluntary sectors. It meets normally on the last Saturday of alternate months at the Joiners Arms, Hunwick between
 ●12.15 and 2.00pm – light lunch £2.00
 ●Contact the Secretary Cllr Professor Alan Townsend, 62A Low Willington, Crook, Durham DL15 0BG tel, 01388 746479 email alan.townsend@wearvalley.gov.uk

WEST WALES

Regular meetings at Swansea Guildhall
 ●Details from Roger Warren Evans on roger@warrenevans.net

WIMBLEDON

New society forming.
 ●Please contact Andy Ray on 07944545161 if you are interested.

NOTICEBOARD

These pages are your forum and we're open to your ideas. Please email Tom Hampson, Editorial Director of the Fabian Society at tom.hampson@fabians.org.uk.

MUM'S THE WORD IS ENDING WOMEN'S POVERTY THE KEY TO ENDING CHILD POVERTY?

Fabian Women's Network, Oxfam and Fawcett event

Labour Party Conference
Tuesday 23rd Sept, 6.30-8.30pm, Dickens
Thackeray Suite, Radisson Hotel, Manchester

SPEAKERS:

Katherine Rake (Director, Fawcett)
Kate Wareing (Director, UK Poverty Programme, Oxfam)
Rt Hon James Purnell MP (tbc)

CHAIR:

Seema Malhotra (Director, Fabian Women's Network)

Refreshments served.

Part of the Oxfam/Fawcett Mum's the Word joint campaign

Fabian Executive Elections

Call for nominations.

Closing date 15th August 2008

Nominations are now invited for:

- 15 Executive Committee places
- 4 Local Society places on the Executive
- Honorary Treasurer
- Scottish Convenor
- Welsh Convenor
- 13 Young Fabian Executive places

Election will be by postal ballot of all full national members and local society members. Nominations should be in writing and individuals can nominate themselves. Local society nominations should be made by local societies. At least two of the 15 national members and one of the four local society members elected must be under the age of 31 at the AGM on 29th November 2008. Nominees for both national and Young Fabian elections should submit a statement in support of their nomination, including information about themselves, of not more than 70 words.

Nominations should be sent to:

Fabian Society Elections
11 Dartmouth Street
London SW1H 9BN.

or they can be faxed to 020 7976 7153
or emailed to calix.eden@fabian-society.org.uk.

Please write the position nominated for at the top of the envelope, fax or subject line of the email. The closing date for nominations is 15th August 2008.

AGM RESOLUTIONS

Any full member, national or local, may submit a resolution to the AGM. The deadline for resolutions is 15th August 2008.

They should be addressed to the General Secretary at the address above or emailed to calix.eden@fabian-society.org.uk.

Resolutions will be circulated in the Autumn issue of Fabian Review and amendments will be invited.

EASTERN REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Saturday 18 October. 10.30
at the Alex Wood Labour Hall, Cambridge

'The Politics of Equality'

Details and tickets from Norman Rimmell
on 01502 573482
or normanrimmell@hotmail.com