THE NEXT LEFT ISSUE

Fabian Review

www.fabians.org.uk

Summer 2009

RED SHOOTS

In search of ideas for the next left

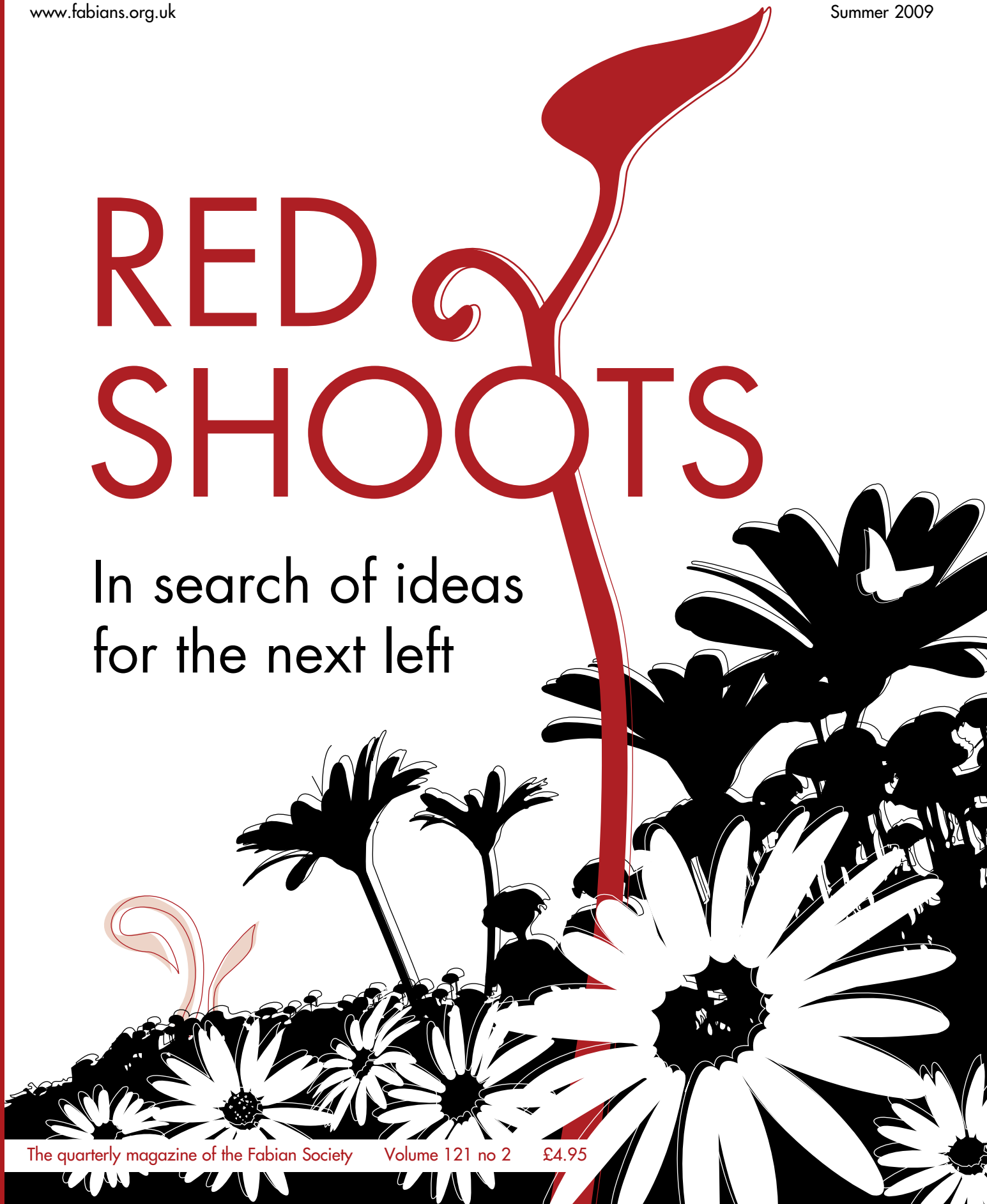

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Image: Adrian Teal

After the Great Stink

Only by giving away power can the Government restore trust in a damaged political system.

After the worst stench of disrepute hung over Westminster since the open sewers of the 19th century, Labour's most catastrophic electoral performance for decades and the shame of two British fascists in the European Parliament, Labour appeared to be a party on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

The question of leadership now appears settled; very few MPs can have any appetite for a third botched coup, and the May rebels had neither a candidate nor any clear agenda for change. But the more important question was always about the public argument and political direction of the Government.

There have been too many distractions but it should have been easier to identify what they were a distraction from.

Gordon Brown's Government has shown more policy purpose in response to the recession, but has yet to tell voters what Labour seeks a further term in office to do. Not being the Tories will not work a fourth time, when 'anybody but Labour' has become a popular sentiment too. That means that a dispiriting anti-politics campaign will see the incumbents lose by default; a fighting chance for Labour is only possible if voters believe there are substantive differences at stake.

Labour can best address what it stands for now with a concrete and radical agenda for how the Government will use the next 290 days of power, rather than through shiny vistas for a hypothetical fourth term. Labour has the bully pulpit of power. It could still frame public arguments, testing would-be 'progressive' Conservatives who no longer oppose what they recently opposed, and seeking to entrench Labour's claim about where the new centre of British politics lies.

This is not to advocate defeatism, still less a scorched earth policy. It would create a real contest, by offering voters the choice they have the right to expect.

But this can be done only if the Government's agenda on the three central issues – public spending in a post-recession economy; political reform; and the climate change deal we need – are clearly about radical change, rather than about defaulting back to business as usual and incremental reform.

The Iraq inquiry demonstrated this danger. The Prime Minister's initial commitment to hold an inquiry, over a year ago, was important. As the point was to learn lessons from the most contentious foreign policy episode for half a century, it was vital to go the extra mile for openness. A rapid rethink, after an untenable initial instinct for privacy, means the inquiry will be more open. This can be diagnosed as a bad case of governmentitis, where the advice of the Cabinet Secretary seemed to trump elementary public politics.

The Iraq inquiry offers an important broader lesson as Gordon Brown revives the idea of a new constitutional settlement.

Many fear it is now too late in the day. Proving this wrong depends on Gordon Brown recalling a lesson from his first decision as Chancellor: making the Bank of England independent. Giving away power to restore trust is the only way reform will have public credibility now. Offer a referendum on electoral reform. Create a citizens' convention to begin writing our new constitution. Let the politicians listen – and the people decide. It would take a leap of faith. If this may seem unlikely, there is a new politics to be gained. Is there so much to lose? *SK*

Fabian events and news are now reported at our blog, **Next Left**. Join the debate at www.nextleft.org and here are some recent highlights. We are also now on Twitter @ thefabians

Wednesday, 11 March 2009

Liberal lessons for Labour

Shirley Williams was 'in conversation' for the Fabians with Newsnight's Michael Crick - who it transpires was chair of the Young Fabians at the same time Shirley was chair of the Fabians proper. (This was in 1981 – the year of "the big bust up" and "acrimonious meetings".) Shirley was talking about 'how liberal is Labour' and her main point was a good one: that Labour had been particularly good on gender and race equality but its major liberal achievements had come in the first term. This is because the liberal agenda was bequeathed to Blair by John Smith. Blair was always more interested in law and order issues than liberal ones. Michael Crick challenged her on this by saying that it is easy to be liberal in opposition but once in power realpolitik gets in the way, M15 puts threat evidence in front of your nose and you naturally become more authoritarian…and that when Shirley was in Labour governments in the 60s and 70s they had enacted fairly tough legislation too. She conceded half the point, but explained there were strong cabinets in the past who were prepared to forcefully stand up to the PM. Under Blair the cabinet was either weak or bypassed, with Iraq being the prime example.

Posted by Ed Wallis

Friday, 8 May 2009

Both policy and attitudes need changing on housing

Over the last week there has been a good deal of media coverage of our new housing report 'In the Mix'…As ever, the media love a good headline, and the radio talk-shows love a good debate about the 'sink-estate'. That said, most of the debate and coverage has been very balanced. The deeper issues have been given a fair hearing. Right at the top of this list of issues is the theme that we have articulated through the language of 'apartheid cities'. Strong language, as many have pointed out. But there is a truth here that needs to be taken very seriously indeed. At the literal level, it is still the case that much social housing is concentrated in very poor areas and cut off from services and good infrastructure. But apartheid cities is also a metaphor for a process by which all social housing has increasingly been seen as somehow 'other'; the denizen of a different type of person from 'us', the 'virtuous' of a property owning democracy.

Posted by James Gregory

2nd June, 2009

"Europe is a test for all parties" - Miliband

Sideline Europe and you sideline Britain – that was the message from Foreign Secretary David Miliband at a joint Fabian Society and Young Fabians debate. While political and constitutional reform was now the centre of attention for all parties, the Conservatives were pushing a "Europhobe" political programme "under the smokescreen of a reform agenda", said Miliband. He also argued that Cameron's commitment to withdraw from the main centre-right grouping in the European Parliament to ally himself with ultra-nationalist EU allies risked condemning Britain to international political impotence: "To retreat from the centre of the European Union is not just illogical, but dangerous." Any serious reform agenda must engage directly with Europe if Britain wants to remain a key global player, he said. The Tories' determination to review British participation in the Lisbon Treaty would be both pointless and politically damaging. From climate change to terrorism to trade – "if you are not globally engaged, you're vulnerable."

Posted by Paul Prowse

Thursday, 2 July 2009

Rethinking equality doesn't mean ditching it

"A rejection of inequality - both absolute, relative and of opportunity - is absolutely core to who we are. But we will be more successful - not just electorally but in challenging unacceptable inequality - if we adopt and own a different, more nuanced view of fairness and equality" said John Denham. He was making clear that his argument for the left to rethink its politics of equality and fairness in response to the Fabian Society's research for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation is somewhat more nuanced than it may have appeared from yesterday's Guardian report. That is followed up in other newspapers, though once again, the reflex to reach for an outdated Blairite-Brownite analysis of every issue obscures much more than it illuminates. Indeed Denham's case for a broad coalition strongly reflects the strategy of 'progressive universalism' which Gordon Brown and Ed Balls pioneered at the Treasury: Something for everyone, but most for the worst-off.

Posted by Sunder Katwala

Fabian Review

Fabian Review is the quarterly journal of the Fabian Society

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"Once in a generation"

As the daily beat of the expenses scandal finally quietens, what longer term conclusions have the British public drawn about reform? Here we present new polling that shows a real appetite for radical constitutional change.

Of those who expressed a preference,

67% chose

"This is a once-in-a-generation chance for a major overhaul to improve our democracy"*

as the statement that came closer to view, and

just 33% chose

"The British constitution is tried and tested – whatever its problems, we should be careful about changing too much too quickly."

*Excluding the 19% who responded 'neither' or 'don't know"

Some people have argued that the political crisis over expenses demonstrates the need for constitutional reform. Which one of the following statements comes closer to your view?

52%
"We should set up a 'citizens' convention' and involve people from all walks of life in deliberating on how to improve the way the UK is governed"

19%
"MPs should hold a special session of parliament to come up with a reform package"

19% Neither of these

10% "Don't know"

How satisfied are you with the way democracy works in the UK?

46% Total satisfied

50% Total not satisfied

4% Don't know

Which two or three if any of the following reforms do you MOST agree with? [Please tick up to three options]

59 Rather than the prime minister choosing the date of the next general election we need regular fixed dates

50 We need an electoral system that is more representative of the actual votes cast

36 Constituents should be able to sack their MP by holding a new election to choose an MP between elections if 10 percent of them want it

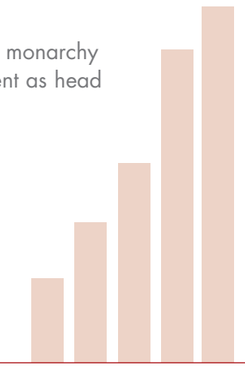
33 We should make parliament more democratic by replacing the House of Lords with an elected second chamber

24 We should clean up our messy and informal constitution and draw up a single written constitution like that of the United States

11 We should replace the monarchy with an elected President as head of state

4 None of these

5 Don't know



A challenge to us all

Tom Hampson is Editorial Director of the Fabian Society

After the deluge, the reckoning. In early May, the *Daily Telegraph* bought a samizdat CD of MPs expenses claims and started publishing the details as front page splashes day after day. The following two months of onslaught on individual MPs, on the Speaker and on the reputation of Westminster as a whole, resulted in humiliation, resignations, abject apologies and more than half a million pounds of repaid claims.

This was bound to have some effect on how the public felt about our political system, and polls have already shown high levels of 'anger' at the way MPs have behaved. But would the change be profound? Would the public be wiser and more considered than the media and excitable bloggers? Would the change be lasting?

Well, we now have the answers to the first two questions: yes and yes. This poll, commissioned from YouGov by the Fabian Society in association with Unlock Democracy and Real Change, suggests a profound shift did happen this spring, a dissatisfaction with politics-as-usual and a real appetite for detailed and sweeping constitutional reform: a citizens convention, fixed term parliaments, proportional representation, and the right for constituents to sack miscreant MPs in the middle of their terms.

Indeed, asked how satisfied they are with how democracy works in the

UK, only 46 per cent said they were satisfied while 50 per cent said they were not. Just compare this to YouGov polling on the same question in 2003 when 74 per cent of respondents said they were satisfied against just 24 per cent dissatisfied.

Polls are always snapshots, and of course none of this has happened during a time of normal politics. This febrile period has been inextricably entangled with the series of calamities that have driven the Labour Government's own disastrous poll ratings. This means that numbers like these could feasibly be a result of the electoral cycle – as much a response to an unpopular government as a genuine cry for change.

But the data on Scotland suggests otherwise. Since Labour's piecemeal constitutional reform in its first term of office, some areas of the UK have now been living with reformed voting and more modern democratic systems for more than a decade. If you cut the figures geographically, you can see the effects of this. In the south of England – excluding London – 43 per cent of our respondents said they were satisfied with the way democracy works in the UK. In Scotland it was 56 per cent. In the south, 38 per cent said constituents should be able to sack their MP. In Scotland it was just 24 per cent. Meanwhile, in the south 30 per cent said "We should make parliament more democratic by replacing the House of Lords with an elected second chamber" and in Scotland that figure was much higher at 47 per cent. This seems like a very public endorsement for the effect that voting reform has on voters – people feel more engaged with the system, less angry at their elected representatives, and more uncomfortable with undemocratic, unelected power.

And it is in this debate about which form of voting reform that these figures provide particular succour for reformers. Peter Kellner, our pollster, ran the data from the voting reform questions through an AV-style run off, and PR wins hands down.

Even only a couple of years ago it would have been enough to say this offers a challenge to the Government, to politicians and the Labour Party to find concrete ways to respond to this appetite for reform. But politics has changed. Movement politics is increasingly important and, as our poll shows, people trust themselves rather than politicians to find solutions. After Obama's success in mobilisation and consultation, and now that so much campaigning and debating and thinking takes place online, this is the first big challenge to the new politics in Britain – to come up with workable and politically acceptable solutions to this crisis in confidence. Indeed, it is a challenge to us all. ■

Electoral reform

At present we elect MPs by 'first-past-the-post'. Candidates compete to represent local constituencies. The candidate who wins the biggest number of votes is the winner, even if s/he obtains fewer than half of all votes cast.

Some people suggest we should change our voting system move towards the 'alternative vote', whereby MPs still represent individual constituencies, but voters indicate their first, second and third choices. When votes are counted, the least popular candidates are eliminated, and the second (and, if necessary subsequent) preferences of their supporters are counted, until one candidate achieves an overall majority and is declared the winner.

This system keeps the link between MPs and their constituencies but, like the present system, does NOT ensure that parties are represented in Parliament according to their overall national support.

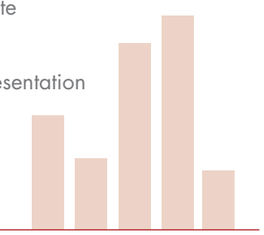
Other people suggest that we should move away from a pure constituency system to one of proportional representation, so that parties are represented in Parliament according to their overall level of support. Such a system would make it easier for small-to-medium sized parties to win seats, but much harder for either Labour or Conservative to win a general election outright.

Which of these systems is your first preference?

25	The present system - first-past-the-post
25	The Alternative Vote
34	Proportional Representation
16	Don't know

And which one is your second preference?

24	The present system - first-past-the-post
37	The Alternative Vote
25	Proportional Representation
14	Don't know



YouGov questioned a representative sample of 2,001 adults throughout Great Britain online between 1st and 3rd July 2009.

Seizing the moment to involve citizens

Peter Facey
is the Director of Unlock Democracy

The renewed debate inside the Labour Party about democratic reform represents a dilemma for campaigners. While it is of course welcome, to a large extent it has come far too late. With Labour's poll ratings at an historic low, the Party is open to the accusation that any reform now has less to do with what is good for the country and more to do with self-interest. How can Labour go into an election promising real change without the programme being cynically written off?

This poll offers us some clues about how this circle might be squared. The first conclusion we can draw from it is that a demand for change resonates across the political divide. Even a majority of Conservative voters (53 per cent) agreed with the statement "this is a once-in-a-generation chance for a major overhaul to improve our democracy." 43 per cent of Conservatives support a more representative voting system – slightly more than the 41 per cent who support a system of recall for MPs. These are surprising figures considering the longstanding and dogmatic opposition the Conservative front bench has had to electoral reform.

Overall, the survey suggests that a clear majority of the public supports electoral reform and – given the choice – would prefer a proportional system over the alternative vote (where single member constituencies would be retained but 'X' voting would be replaced by preference voting). This is consistent with repeated polls taken over the past decade and the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust's periodic State of the Nation polls in particular. It is clear that Cameron is potentially vulnerable to the accusation that his promise of change is merely cosmetic if the argument can be presented forcefully enough.

The key question though is, how do we come up with a package of democratic reform that can evade the accusation that it has been seized upon by a self-serving elite desperately looking to save its own skin? We need to be wary of feeding cynical attitudes about politics. For this reason, for example, I would prefer not to reach for the Jenkins' Commissions proposals from ten years ago and use it as the basis of a referendum for electoral reform, as is suggested by Alan Johnson on p12 of this magazine. We need a system which people don't feel is being foisted on them by the usual suspects in Whitehall and Westminster.

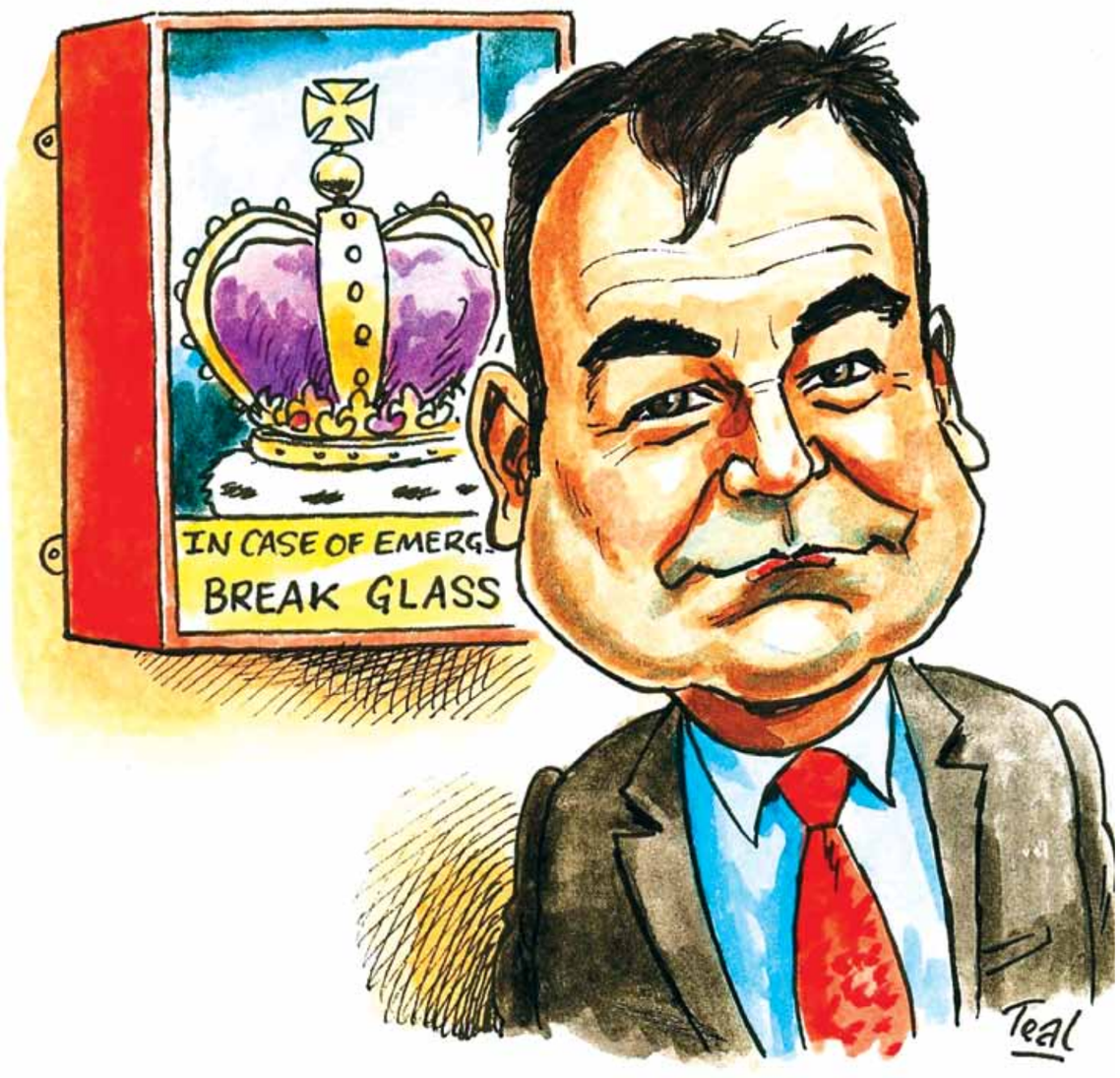
As an alternative, Unlock Democracy and others including Compass, Progress and the IPPR have been calling for a 'citizens' convention'. Under the Unlock Democracy model, at least 100 randomly selected individuals would deliberate on a range of possible options for reform and make a number of proposals to Parliament. It is envisaged that it would consult widely, receiving evidence from both experts, politicians and the general public. Parliament would have to respond to the convention's report within three months and if any of the proposals were rejected the convention or a petition of at least 5 per cent of the public would be able to force a referendum on the subject.

Deliberative bodies such as this have a strong track record. In the Canadian provinces of Ontario and British Columbia, citizens' assemblies have deliberated on the electoral system. Citizens' juries are used successfully by quangos and local authorities on an almost daily basis. (The Government experimented with citizens' juries in 2007 but what they came up with were sadly not worthy of the name, functioning as little more than glorified focus groups). And of course the criminal justice system has been using the jury model successfully for centuries.

The key question though is, how do we come up with a package of democratic reform that can evade the accusation that it has been seized upon by a self-serving elite desperately looking to save its own skin?

The level of support for a citizens' convention in the Fabian poll is quite striking (52 per cent), particularly in contrast to the relatively low level of support for MPs to sort the mess out themselves (19 per cent). It is crucial that such a system is seen to be unbiased, which is why the executive would need to be kept at arm's length. However, so long as that can be achieved it would appear to be the best model for moving forward in a way that would satisfy most people.

This poll, and others, shows that the public want to be a part of any reform process not merely spectate from the sidelines. If we are to go down this route however, we need to legislate for the convention as soon as possible. It is crucial that the process is put on a statutory footing so that it can't simply be closed down after the next general election and so that people have an assurance that its conclusions cannot simply be dismissed out of hand. Martin Caton's Citizen's Convention Bill has been drafted, already has the support of over 120 MPs and is ready to be put through the parliamentary wringer just as soon as Gordon Brown lets it. Let's seize this opportunity before it is too late. ■



The man who won't be king

Jon Cruddas is an intriguing mix of the blokey and the brainiac, a combination that has caused many across the Labour Party to identify him as the man to lead them out of their current woes. But he's not likely to be persuaded: he likes things just the way they are. "I'm having a blast" he tells Mary Riddell.

Mary Riddell
is a columnist for the Daily Telegraph

Getting to Jon Cruddas's office from reception at Portcullis House requires a trek that might daunt Sir Ranulph Fiennes. "The less important you are round here, the further away they put you," Cruddas says when we finally arrive. Few, these days, would consider the MP for Dagenham to be insignificant.

For Labour rebels, he was (and still is) the man who might wield the knife against Gordon Brown. No blood required – only the murmur of no confidence which could have weakened the Prime Minister sufficiently to provoke a leadership contest. But, despite his colleagues' imprecations, Cruddas declined to play Macbeth to Brown's Duncan.

Asked why he helped save a PM forced to plead with the Parliamentary Labour Party to save his job, Cruddas says: "I can't see how it's any remedy to our problems to throw one bloke under a train and put another bloke in through a coronation. That's just symptomatic of our problems."

As he adds, in a none-too-oblique reference to Alan Johnson: "Installing someone just because he might have a back story and a communications strategy seems to me to be no way out of the dangerous place we're in. Our significant problems can't just be traded off in some game of top trumps.

"A friend quoted Gramsci to me the other day, saying these are 'the morbid symptoms of an interregnum'. To resolve a crisis that started off in financial services and moved into the real economy, you don't just trade off one person against another. Brown has done a lot of good fire-fighting in terms of recapitalising the banks and keeping the whole system going.

"The real question now is to design a new system, not just economically but socially and politically. This is epochal; there's no comfort zone you can go back to." Although Cruddas has limited praise for Brown – "In the transition, he's been brilliant," – he warns that using 'green shoots' as an excuse to revert to the status quo would commit not only the PM, but the party, to oblivion.

> Cruddas, to my surprise, rules himself out of running for the leadership, categorically and forever

Labour would be "absolutely gone. I see this as reflective of the 1920s and '30s crisis of the Liberal Party." Is he predicting the strange death of Labour Britain? "Well, it could be. Why do people think the core vote has bottomed out at 20 per cent?" Support, he thinks, could sink much further. "Our coalition has been splintered for a long time. This [slump in popularity] poses major questions about the future of the Labour Party. That's seen as a heretical view, but I don't think you can just assume things."

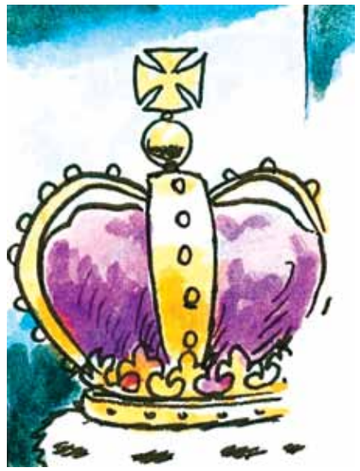
Part heretic, part flag bearer of the left, Cruddas is not easy to label. Aged 47, he is a seaman's son, for whom the fears and values of the working man are hardwired in his DNA. In many ways, he is a contradiction. He did well in the deputy leadership election, coming third, but rejected a job in Brown's Cabinet. (He is coy about whether he has been offered a front bench post since then.)

Despite the ponderous title of his Warwick PhD on economic philosophy – 'An Analysis of Value Theory, the sphere of production and contemporary approaches to the reorganisation of workplace relations' – he wears scholarship lightly. Even in matters of style and taste, he is a chameleon. Though his suits are said by style critics to be more Next than Jermyn Street, the label on one of several spare ties reads Giorgio Armani. In his office library, Ayn Rand jostles for space with Philip Gould.

"See, I was never into scientific socialism. I was quite interested in Blair's communitarianism. Early Blair." (As a former Blair adviser, he was also presumably responsible for shaping the message, though he claims to have been "small beer.") "A lot of the debate around the Labour Party's future in the coming years will be about reinstating aspects of Blairism. Blair lost the language and the ethical dimension, but there was quite a rich texture to the early Blair." And, he implies, quite a threadbare feel to the later Brown.

Cruddas, a localist with his ear to the Essex ground, saw long ago that Labour was heading for disaster. Where slicker politicians preferred managerialist jargon, he deals in plotlines. "Once, all you had to do was to precision bomb messages on to a group of key voters in 60 constituencies. That's all gone." In the "absence of a new story that makes sense to all levels... the BNP reaped the whirlwind."

As an early forecaster of the danger posed by the BNP, he considers their two seats in the European elections "not that bad. They thought they'd get 12. We know because we [he means Labour] have got people inside. We got away lightly... But nearly one million people voted for them, despite the most sophisticated campaign against them."



"I'm not a liberal. Liberalism has very dangerous conclusions philosophically. It's very individualized. Labour should be looking at the future with reference to its own past"

Cruddas, who believes that the BNP's rise will continue, does not discount seats at Westminster. "We can't assume they've hit a ceiling. If we don't start confronting this stuff, the real danger is that you see repetitive voting patterns in seats where they do get in. They build, consolidate, grow."

This surge, he believes, is due to Labour's woeful misreading of the lure of fascism. While the BNP is selling to voters the dream of being "the Labour party their grandparents voted for", the Government risks staying "camped out on a different part of the landscape called Middle England, drinking Liebfraumilch in a Holiday Inn in Watford."

Electoral reform is vital, in his view, to beat the far right "poison". "I once thought first-past-the post choked off this mood. Now I think it creates vacuums for other political forces to colonise." Nor are the insults (and eggs) hurled by the liberal left any answer. "I am not a great egger. "People say: 'Demonise the BNP. They have no place in our democracy.' Why have they got no place in our democracy? If people haven't got a house after 12 years of Labour government and their [adult] kids are still at home with them in a two-bedroom flat, why shouldn't they go elsewhere?"

Cruddas believes in assessing the opposition rationally. "Some elements of the BNP are "very sophisticated – not nearly as crap as people think they are." (UKIP, meanwhile, may be discomfited to learn that he regards its eccentric operation as "endearing; UKIP are great".)

His task sheet listing how to crush the BNP begins with housing. "You've got five million people in need of social housing and 75,000 repossessions this year. It's the outstanding public policy issue. All other issues are refracted through housing." Cruddas advocates a vast programme of social housing. "Something massive has to be done now. People would recognise that as a new deal."

Second, he calls for honesty on immigration. "My constituency is the fastest-growing in Britain. It's no coincidence that it's the frontline against the BNP. When I ask what the population is, I get quotes from the 2001 Census." The answer, he says, is to produce "a real-time demographic that alllows services and finances to flow with the headcount." This, he believes, would stop the BNP stoking up fears based on half-truths and exaggerated figures.

Step three is to "put a floor under the labour market. It happens all the time that a guy is on £7 an hour, and his boss says: 'Will you take £5.50, because we've got a bloke who will?' The debates about agency workers were right on the money. Government has steadfastly refused to regulate these markets. There should be a fair employment clause for all public contracts. If you say you can't have cheap, unregulated foreign labour, that chokes off the space in which the far right operates."

The Lindsey oil refinery workers whose dispute flared up again in recent weeks were anathema to some on the liberal left. To Cruddas they are little short of heroes. Speaking of the initial dispute, he cites blacklists against UK Labour by big employers. "We called the guys who struck xenophobic, protectionist and anti-European. That's so disrespectful."

So was Gordon Brown right to vaunt British jobs for British workers? "He wasn't wrong. But we haven't got an architecture to deliver it. It's a sham .. and people can see the discrepancy in their everyday lives."

Then there is immigration. "There have been extraordinary patterns of immigration from 2003/4 onwards, even before the EU accession. A lot of [incomers] are from outside the EU. We've never confronted any of this. We're talking about 200,000 a year into London. That's a borough, right? You've got estimates of 600,000 unregularised immigrants in this city alone. That's three boroughs, and there's only 33 in the city."

Cruddas wants an amnesty for all unregistered migrants, plus a tough, points system based on the Australian model. "You cannot just allow a free market of Labour without any labour market reform agenda," he says. Add in a swipe against "the trite, banal view that everything about Europe is fantastic", and the Cruddas programme might attract some plaudits from the hard right.

His agenda is a magpie's stash of measures he would define as practical populism, drawn from across the political spectrum. This wish list includes scrapping ID cards, building "paediatric allergy centres for kids with asthma and food allergies", better parks and abandoning Trident.

The "good society" and the "ethical socialism" to which he aspires have many touchstones. He is interested in, though ultimately dismissive of, Red Toryism. He admires Charles Clarke's thinking and is intrigued by James Purnell's "liberal republicanism... though I'm not a liberal; liberalism has very dangerous conclusions philosophically. It's very individualised. Labour should be looking at the future with reference to its own past – Toynbee, Tawney, Hobhouse."

New Labour, in his view, was for good times and bull markets. "We were totally ill-equipped when the music stopped. It was assumed that people would always vote Labour – that they had nowhere else to go. We borrowed the techniques of Tesco: this is the consequence."

Though he says he still thinks Labour could win the election, he is gloomy about "the sheer fatigue and intellectual exhaustion" of long incumbency. Is Brown finished? "He has to be so radical and populist. The jury's out; at best. I don't know the guy, but his default setting is cautious. I don't think Cameron's got it either."

So who will lead the Labour party into the future Cruddas wants? A political cleanskin, he has stood aloof from Cabinet. This, many think, is a deliberate strategy to position himself for the leadership, possibly on a fantasy ticket with his "mate", James Purnell, who recently stalked out of government.

Cruddas, to my surprise, rules himself out of running for the leadership, categorically and for ever. He ran for the post of Deputy Leader at the suggestion of Compass, secure in the belief that he would lose, and will seek no future promotion. "I'm not interested in Westminster, or Parliament really. [The leadership] doesn't interest me. There are certain identikit characteristics which a leader has to have, and I don't have them. I don't have the certainty needed to do it. I couldn't deal with it. I have a different conception of how I want to live my life."

Partly, he is talking about lifestyle (he is married to the political adviser, Anna Healy, with whom he has a 16-year-old son). And partly, he is talking about compromise – "playing some game, thinking if I shave 20 per cent of this [ideal], then it might work."

"I literally am not interested. A lot of blokes in and around Cabinet could do it. Harriet Harman has shown real steel. There's the Miliband lads, James Purnell and younger people. I never even thought I'd be an MP. I'm having a blast. But I don't want anything. I'm not ambitious – that's my problem. Tony Blair, Nick Clegg and David Cameron are physiologically interchangeable. They are merging into the same person – constructing a politician that fits the rubric. The parties themselves have been hollowed out."

Jon Cruddas will not join the hollow men. That, it seems to me, is both his greatest strength and his signal weakness. If Labour loses badly, there will be any number of good thinkers to debate the future and too few powerful politicians able to reshape and resell a broken party. Cruddas can think the unthinkable. But if he will not also dare to do the undoable, then who else in his party will?

Cruddas was never seen by his admirers as just a king-breaker or king-maker. He was also, they hoped, a future king. In the coming months, many will try to persuade him to change his mind.

When I leave, Cruddas offers to see me out, but I tell him not to bother. On the long walk back I am stopped by a policeman who demands to know why I have no escort before crossly marching me off the premises. "I will be having a word with Mr Cruddas," he warns. He is not the only one. ■

JON CRUDDAS PODCAST

To hear Jon Cruddas talking to Mary Riddell about the rise of the far right and the future of the Labour Party, visit the Fabian website at **http://www.fabians.org.uk/general-news/podcasts/cruddas-bnp** to download an exclusive podcast.

The view from Duck Island

Alan Johnson MP
is the Home Secretary

Photo: Andy Drysdale/Rex Features

The current political and economic crises present an opportunity for bold reform. Don't let the Tories kid you they are up to the job, says Alan Johnson

Out of turbulence and confusion can emerge new opportunities, fresh ideas and radical change.

These are indeed turbulent times – the economic pandemic spread much faster than the H1N1 virus. As Paul Krugman has observed, it was Gordon Brown who supplied the anti-virals, and as the symptoms fade it must be the left that develops the vaccine to inoculate the world against further outbreaks.

We in Britain have had to endure an added dimension, what many in the population would describe as 'swine flu' without the flu. Politicians were hardly high in the public's affections before the *Daily Telegraph* saga began, but now, as we stand marooned on Duck Island, it feels as if we'll wait some time before our return ticket to the human race arrives.

But all of this creates opportunity. Neither the banking collapse nor the allowances scandal should have happened; the former created misery for our constituents and the latter added disillusion to their disquiet. It's a miserable way to create a climate for change but advance through anguish is a well-trodden path.

There are three broad areas to the necessary debate.

The first is the reshaping of our economy. This is where the Conservatives will undoubtedly use the 'age of austerity' rhetoric to pursue the ideological battle against public services which David Cameron managed to suppress during his hoodie-hugging phase.

The second (much more prosaic) area concerns the terms and conditions for Parliamentarians.

But I want to dwell on the third, which is the constitutional debate about how democracy works in our country. Political renewal is the agenda of the left. By definition, the right is ill-equipped to do anything other than conserve.

Keir Hardie's founding manifesto for the Labour Representation Committee included votes for women, a Scottish Parliament, Lords reform and proportional representation. The Tories were traditionally against all four. They have modified their approach to the first (although don't bank on unanimity if it came to a vote a Conservative Party Conference); have been roundly defeated on the second; and have been forced by their parliamentary leadership to swear a superficial allegiance to the third. (I simply do not believe that even a majority of Tory MPs genuinely supports an elected House of Lords. Cameron believed it was a pose they could strike without ever having to implement the policy.)

On electoral reform, as Cameron could legitimately argue at PMQs recently, the Conservative Party has supported First Past The Post when they were in front and when they were behind; when they won and when they lost. Bone-headed consistency is indeed an attribute we should concede to them.

Cameron's Open University speech in May was meant to project the Tories as the change agents on constitutional reform. The proposals he laid out were devoid of any meaningful commitments but, more importantly, they sought to close off debate about the most fundamental aspect of any democracy: how people's votes are translated into political power. When I set out my view that there should be a referendum on the day of the next general election giving the British people a choice between retaining the current voting system or moving to AV+, Cameron wrote an article for the *Evening Standard* describing PR (the voting system rather than his profession) as a step backwards, and challenging me and other proponents to explain how it would help in current circumstances. His defence of FPTP was the familiar one. It allows the electorate to vote 'strong' governments in and keep the BNP out.

The first point to make in response is that there is either a constitutional dimension to the debate on political re-engagement or there is not. It's difficult to understand the thought process behind an acceptance that fixed term parliaments, candidate selection and the number of MPs can be valid and relevant to the situation we are in, but that any discussion at all about the electoral system is not.

To take one specific element, some argue that we need more MPs who are free of any party allegiance. Whilst I am firmly of the view that politics can be cleaned up without the help of irritating self-righteous men in white suits, it's worth remembering that for Martin Bell to be elected in Tatton, Labour and the Lib Dems had to collude to deny the electorate the opportunity to vote for them. Our miserably disempowering voting system is such that the citizen who admires the individual attributes of a local candidate but wants a different political party to form the government is forced to sacrifice one for the other.

The citizen who admires the individual attributes of a local candidate but wants a different political party to form the government if forced to sacrifice one for the other

The 'safe seat' mentality must at least be an aspect of the accusation that MPs became careless in their expenses claims and dismissive of their electorate. Safe seats can exist under any electoral system, but FPTP is uniquely able to ensure that even at times when the majority of the electorate turn against the incumbents, they will struggle to unseat them if the protesting vote is split between different parties, as is likely.

As Roy Jenkins pointed out in his seminal report, "the semi-corollary of a high proportion of the constituencies being in 'safe seat' territory is not merely that many voters pass their entire adult lives without ever voting for a winning candidate, but they do so without any realistic hope of influencing a result."

Cameron's Conservatives argue that none of this is relevant to the urgent need to rethink the way politics is conducted in Britain. They say there must be no change at all to a system that allows MPs with a minority vote for them as individuals to form a government on the basis of a minority vote for their party after which, fortified by the whipping system, they become what Lord Hailsham described as an elective dictatorship. They say we must stick with FPTP because "you know your vote has led directly to the ousting of one government for another." Leaving aside the palpable nonsense of this description of our current system, what Cameron meant in this extract from his *Evening Standard* article is that FPTP produces single party government.

Jenkins tore this argument to shreds in five cogent paragraphs, demonstrating that "in only 64 of the past 150 years has there prevailed the alleged principal benefit of the FPTP system, the production of a single party government with an undisputed command over the House of Commons."

He went on to propose a system, AV+, that maintains the constituency link, ensures that MPs have majority support (thus actually strengthening that link), would deny any seats to parties with less than around 11 per cent support and provides greater proportionality whilst meeting his Commission's remit for stable government.

I have argued for the British people to be given a choice. I may not be able to convince colleagues that this should be the precise outcome of the debate on how to make progress on this aspect of constitutional renewal. However, I work for a leader who accepts the need for that renewal, with electoral reform as an essential element. And I belong to a Party that could, as Jenkins pointed out, "have the unique distinction of having broken the spell under which parties when they want to reform do not have the power, and when they have the power do not want the reform." ■

Apples and oranges

Not all markets are the same, says Richard Reeves, and Labour should be wary of being too gleeful that 'the state is back'

Richard Reeves
is Demos' Director.

At last year's Labour Conference the atmosphere was odd. This, of course, is nothing new: party conferences are strange affairs. What was odd about Labour in 2008 was the clear delight with which many delegates, and some MPs, were greeting the unfolding financial crisis. Ed Balls said that those who had favoured 'light-touch' regulation had been 'routed'. Even the thoughtful Ed Miliband told the Fabians that "the line between the state and the market had been redrawn", and evoked the memory of his father, the Marxist academic Ralph Miliband. Guardian columnists Larry Elliott and Seamus Milne announced the end of "new Labour economics".

After years of reluctantly following new Labour's broad acceptance of free markets, with one bound the Party was free. The state – the Big State – was back. The intrinsic instability and unfairness of markets had been revealed. A new social democratic era was dawning. Allied with the anger against rich bankers, the combination of financial crisis and recession meant that Labour could now push up top tax rates, argue more clearly for state regulation and rein in the market.

There is no question that almost the entire political class – new Labour stalwarts included –underestimated the systemic risks in the global financial service sector. It was Liberals like Vince Cable and commentators like Elliott who issued unheeded warnings. Nobody except a few Taliban-type City apologists think things should go back to the way they were.

But there is a grave danger now that Labour will overreact in the opposite direction. The travails of the financial markets do not, in themselves, tell us anything about the markets in apples, education or cars. It was a market which failed, not the market.

The statist – dare I write 'Fabian'? – strand of the Labour movement has a instinctive bias towards state action, and central state action at that. Sidney and Beatrice Webb wanted to 'constrain' the individual in order to make them each 'a healthier, no nobler and more efficient being." As George Bernard Shaw put in an influential essay for the six year-old Fabian Society in 1889: "Consequently we have the distinctive term Social Democrat, indicating the man or woman who desires through Democracy to gather the whole people into the State..."

I want to stress at this point the distinction between the Fabian, statist tradition and the currently, actually existing Fabian Society: Sunder Katwala is no Shaw or Webb. But I do want to make the case for a more liberal version of progressive politics, one sketched in Philip Collins' and my Demos pamphlet The Liberal Republic. For radical liberals, both the state and the market are social institutions which can either facilitate or inhibit individuals from living good lives of their own choosing. Liberals are not 'for' or 'against' either the state or the market – we are agnostic about both. The question is always: do our social, economic and political arrangements give more people more power over the course, content and circumstances of their lives? But as the liberal philosopher Amartya Sen argues, "Responsible adults must be in charge of their own well-being; it is for them to decide how to use their capabilities."

The ideal animating the idea of a liberal republic is that individuals have the power to determine and create their own version of a good life. The 'good society' is one composed of independent, capable people charting their own course, rather than a perfect shape to be carved by the elite. It is messy and unpredictable. There will not be a postcode lottery – but there may be postcode democracy. Rather than having to make the case for 'devolving' power down to individuals, those who want power to be vested in communities or state institutions need to make the case for consolidating it upwards.

> The 'good society' is one composed of independent, capable people charting their own course, rather than a perfect shape to be carved by the elite

The reason why republican liberals end up being pro-market is not because of some ideological fundamentalism, nor because we think markets are in some way inherently moral. Markets provide people with the freedom to barter and exchange, to use their labour power and consumer power in the way they think will lead them towards their version of a good life. Markets are awesomely effective at distributing power – most of the time. So markets serve liberal ends by dispersing power to individuals. But when economic power becomes concentrated in monopolies or cartels, the liberating potential of markets is undermined. This is why liberal economics is not neo-liberal economics. The arbitrary power accumulated in the City, with destructive potential for the rest of us, was not a liberal utopia, for sure.

But there is a risk that recent economic events will blind us to the overwhelmingly positive contribution of free markets to prosperity and liberty. The test to be applied to any social or economic structure is the same as the one T H Green posed for any action by government: "Does it liberate individuals by increasing their self-reliance or their ability to add to human progress?" Markets provide an important means through which people can exercise what Berlin called "the painful privilege of choosing".

But if liberals tend in practice to support markets, they also recognise that individuals therefore need key resources – including money. Unlike their libertarian distant cousins, republican liberals do not however assume that the conditions for a self-directed life emerge out of thin air. Independence requires a set of what Amartya Sen labels capabilities – especially financial resources, education and skills and health. Without them the goal of independence is a pipe dream. Egalitarians ought to focus on the capabilities people have, rather than on narrow measures such as income or poverty. Liberals care deeply about equality, but in terms of life chances, rather than income. 'The problem of inequality," Sen argues, 'in fact gets magnified as the attention is shifted from income inequality to the inequality in the distribution of substantive freedoms and capabilities.'

The state can enhance autonomy, not least through the judicial channelling of resources to young people who would otherwise struggle to develop the capabilities necessary for genuine autonomy. The is in danger of succumbing to ancient statist instincts, becoming those "impatient reformers" John Stuart Mill warned against, the kind who "thought it easier and shorter to get possession of the government than of the intellects and dispositions of the public". The intellectual revival of the progressive left which must precede any political recovery for Labour has to be based on the resuscitation of even older liberal instincts. This is the debate that should dominate this year's conference. One can but hope. ■

Where do we stand on the state?

The left need to reassert its belief in the state, but not the state as we know it, argues Larry Whitty

Larry Whitty
is a Labour peer, former General Secretary of the Labour Party and a former Environment Minister

It strikes me that it is time someone stood up for the state – though perhaps not the state as we know it. At a recent Fabian seminar I was both distressed and amused to hear so many politicians queuing up to declare they were "not statists". *'L'etat ce n'est pas nous'* was the cry.

Amused – because there is a history of Fabians being attacked from both left and right as 'top down socialists', 'statists' or 'state paternalists', almost as derided as Marxists and Stalinists. Distressed – because at this stage in our history, faced with overwhelming problems of climate change, inequality and global recession, it is not the time to be disavowing the role of the state in progressive politics.

> For most people the most important part of the state is the local state: it is there that services are delivered and democratic influence can be exerted

Arguably the whole *point* of politics of any sort is to gain control of the state; political argument is about how to use the power and authority of that state. Yet during thirty years of Thatcherism and New Labour – aided and abetted by our strident media – the dominant political discourse has been to limit and decry the role of the state.

As a result, the state has lost much of its legitimacy – not only in its 'leftist' roles as central planner of the economy or as owner of the commanding heights of productive industry, but in more liberal causes like the direct provision of public services where the mantra 'private (or third sector) good, public bad' has taken hold. And increasingly the state's liberal role as regulator of the market has been distorted to mean less regulation.

This delegitimation has been most acute for the redistributive role of the state using tax and expenditure policies to achieve greater equality: only the provision of a safety net is now seen as legitimate. To my mind the greatest failure of this period of New Labour government has been to preside over an actual *increase* in inequality relative to other Western European democracies, even relative to the Thatcher period. That failure reflects pathological reluctance to commit overtly to using the state to achieve greater equality of outcome.

To argue that the state is withering away may seem a strangely counterintuitive thesis to be advancing: in general discourse, whether in the saloon bar or the pages of our newspapers, the state is seen as all powerful and is often deeply resented. Yet in all the above functions the role of the state has receded; only in what the right would argue is its very prime function – that of security and law and order – has the state significantly extended its reach.

But the truth is – whilst an unrepentant statist – I do not much like the state we have got.

Over those same three decades the state has become more centralised (*pace* Scotland and Wales); more intrusive, with the spooks agenda triumphing since 9/11; more partisan; and in some ways more inefficient. At the same time, society has become more individualised and atomised and there has been a serious dilution of intermediate solidarity organisations from extended families to churches, trade unions and stand alone local government. Thus the distance between individual and state has increased.

As the legitimacy of the state has been challenged, so the concept of public service has been diluted and the role of public servants too often reviled.

Probably the most disempowered part of the state has been local government. Functions have been taken away from local authorities and given to central government agencies, to private companies in transport and street cleaning, to third sector bodies in social housing and increasingly in education. And even in the areas they control they are subject to central controls by earmarking, ring fencing and performance assessment.

I accept some degree of diversity of frontline provision is necessary in some of these areas, but the roles of local state as planner, quality controller and ring holder in the interests of the community need to be preserved.

It may appear inconsistent to be championing both a statist and a localist position. But for most people the most important part of the state *is* the local state: it is there that services are delivered and democratic influence can be exerted. A state which cannot devolve and decentralise whilst preserving its authority is a dysfunctional state. We still have the most centralised state in Western Europe and the most centralised form of state finances.

So we on the left need to reassert the legitimacy of the state itself, including the state at local level. If we fail to do so and conservative hegemony prevails at local and national level we will be deprived of the essential tool we need to deliver both our global and domestic agendas. ■

Crimes against the English language

The English language has been mangled by politicians across the ages. But this trend has become even more troubling under New Labour, writes Jonathan Heawood.

Jonathan Heawood is Director of English PEN www.english-pen.org

What did New Labour have against the English language? At best, this Government has mangled words; at worst, it has criminalised them. As we move into a new political era, we need to reflect not only on the policies that have failed Labour, but also on the attitude towards language that has let down the party, its supporters and their beneficiaries.

When Labour reinvented itself in the early 1990s, it adopted a way of speaking that paralleled the 'third way' between state socialism and market capitalism, a compromise between the plain English of Harold Wilson and Jim Callaghan and the visionary rhetoric of Neil Kinnock and his more militant colleagues. This linguistic third way was neither plain nor visionary; it was calculated not to inspire emotions, but to manage them.

Tony Blair set the gold standard of the linguistic third way when he eulogised Diana as 'the people's princess.' Alastair Campbell's memorable phrase defined the public mood of those strange days in the summer of 1997. Blair may not have been talking about politics but this was political speech in its purest form – in Orwell's words, 'the defence of the indefensible'. In setting his seal of approval on the way that many people felt about a woman they had not known, Blair endorsed a form of populism that served his ends. Diana was the people's princess not through any democratic accountability, but through a form of collective fantasy.

This wave of grief – which Blair rode so adeptly – swept in an era of infantilism during which the public were neither inspired nor informed by politicians but indulged. New Labour's managerial language complemented its failures of political nerve. The Government told us that there were no hard choices to be made between the free market and social justice. There were, and if they'd been made correctly Labour might now be looking at a fourth term. They said that human rights were negotiable. They're not. They said that people such as paedophiles or asylum-seekers don't have rights. They do.

In his final speech to Labour Party Conference in 2006, Blair summarised his attitude towards universal values with the chilling phrase: 'We can only protect liberty by making it relevant to the modern world.' This is clearly not true. We can protect liberty by standing up for liberty, by promoting liberty, by educating the public in the value of liberty, by opposing tyranny, by defying surveillance, by fighting censorship, by renouncing torture and by cherishing political protest. We do not protect liberty by making it relevant to the modern world. We do not keep the fire alight by making it relevant to a bucket of water. The nonsensical phrase reveals the nonsensical thought.

When he catalogued such failings in his 1946 essay, 'Politics and the English Language', Orwell set out to help politicians and their audiences to speak and think more intelligently and intelligibly. Sadly, he did not succeed, and his catalogue of political crimes against language – dying metaphors, verbal false limbs, pretentious diction and meaningless words – is still with us today.

Why does this matter? Because a party which uses language so carelessly has forsaken its power to change the world. And when you've given up on language, you've given up on politics.

If Labour no longer believes in the power of language to inspire, it does not believe in its own capacity to change people's beliefs about their place in the world. Compare Obama's oratory, which inspires his audience with a belief both in his capacity to take responsibility for their country, and their own capacity to take responsibility for their lives, and the lives of others. He told Americans (quoting Ghandi) to 'be the change you want to see in the world.' This is linguistic leadership entwined with political leadership. Blair, meanwhile, told Labour Party Conference in 2005: 'That's what we have been in New Labour. The change makers.' The phrase was rightly derided.

Labour's antipathy to the English language also matters because it echoes something darker about the last twelve years. This Government has created more speech crimes than any previous British administration. It is not only in their own words that Labour ministers reveal their resistance to inspirational language, but in their criminalisation of a range of speech acts, from incitement to religious hatred to the glorification of terrorism. Labour has shunned the motivational rhetoric of the left – and it has outlawed the oratory of those who seek to fill this ideological vacuum, whether they are Islamist or Islamophobic.

The Government has introduced a range of offences criminalising incitement to 'hatred' – an intangible quality that has no business in the statute books – whilst the 'encouragement' of terrorism has also become a crime, and even the possession of materials – including books – which might be useful to a terrorist is an offence carrying a maximum ten-year prison sentence. Now, the Government is introducing measures to prevent criminals from publishing their memoirs, on the grounds that they may offend the victims or their families. This Government seems unable to distinguish between language which merely provokes its audience – as all political language should, if it represents

> …a party which uses language so carelessly has forsaken its power to change the world. And when you've given up on language, you've given up on politics

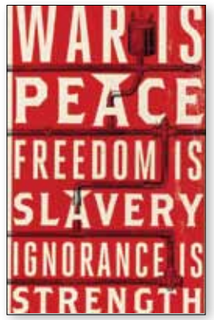
a distinct ideological position with which people may disagree – and language which actively incites violence. This is a dangerous confusion, and one which oppressive states around the world exploit to silence dissent.

There seems to be a fear in Number 10 and across Westminster of the rabble-rousing potential of language. This is a party which came into being when rabbles were effectively roused. Yet today, Labour is afraid of both rabbles and the language that inspires them.

Orwell was right: failed language is failed politics. Conversely, the ability to use language with care and precision contributes to political engagement. Whilst Britain led the recent walkout from President Ahmadinejad's rant at the United Nations, the Norwegian delegation, led by Norway's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Jonas Gahr Støre, remained behind to make the case for human rights. Rather than respond to a discomfiting address with disapproving silence, Støre had the confidence to stand up to Ahmadinejad. It may be no coincidence that this politician is also a writer – the author of a bestselling book, *Å Gjøre en Forskjell* (*Making a Difference*) published in November 2008, in which he shares his views on international politics and human rights. Fittingly, Støre has donated profits from the book to Article 19, an international NGO promoting freedom of expression.

This Labour Government, meanwhile, has devalued freedom of expression and devalued language. The reconstruction of Labour must place more confidence in the power of language to inspire people to good deeds, not just to incite them to bad thoughts. ■

FABIAN QUIZ



Penguin has released a special 60th anniversary edition of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. We have copies to give away; to win one, simply answer the following question:

The reasoning behind the title Nineteen Eighty-Four *is unknown and some believe it referred to the future centenary of a certain political society, founded in 1884. But Orwell's dystopian masterpiece was nearly called something else entirely – what was it?*

Please email your answers to review@fabian-society.org.uk or send a postcard to: Fabian Society, Publications, 11 Dartmouth Street, London, SW1H 9BN.

Answers must be received no later than Friday 4th September 2009.

‘What works’ doesn’t work

Claire Fox argues that New Labour’s rejection of idealism has left it dangerously ill-equipped for the current challenges.

Claire Fox
is Director of the Institute of Ideas, convenor of the annual Battle of Ideas festival and a regular panellist on BBC Radio 4’s Moral Maze

In an article in The Times in June aptly titled No leader, no ideas: a party at the gates of Hell, Rachel Sylvester noted that “this is a government of the living dead, a zombie administration”. She writes of the widespread view that the problem is that “there just aren’t any new ideas… The cupboard is bare.” But there is more to this problem than simply that New Labour has run out of ideas. In many ways, since its inception in the late nineties the party has waged war against ‘big ideas’ and ideals as a principle and is now reaping the bitter fruits.

Firstly it’s worth bearing in mind there are no off-the-peg solutions to the absence of ideas. I remember once having a row with a reasonably senior Labour apparatchik about the party’s lack of vision. Next time he saw me he excitedly assured me he’d set up a working party to come up with a vision. For me, this precisely captured the calculating attitude the party has adopted towards ideas. Opting for opportunistic quick-fix solutions or acting like a business bringing in PR consultants to magic up a mission statement is short-termist and characteristically instrumental.

A potent symbol of the Government’s instrumentalist attitude to ideas is the present fate of the university sector. It has journeyed from the Department of Education through the recently scrapped Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills before being dumped in Lord Mandelson’s fiefdom. That this super-ministry features neither the word education or universities speaks volumes. Universities, arguably the home of ideas, no longer merit a Secretary of State and are instead institutionally christened as instruments of business and the economy, with scant regard for the non-economic benefits of higher study.

This is the inevitable outcome of New Labour’s ‘what works’ utility audit approach: it only values ideas that have useful outcomes; ideas are disposable if they don’t deliver “outcomes”. Knowledge for its own sake is dismissed as self-indulgent and elitist. At the Institute of Ideas we are regularly asked “what are the policy outcomes of your public debates and discussions?” When we explain our belief in the importance of interrogating ideas and creating a public space to explore and debate new ideas per se, we are met with open-mouthed disbelief. What is the point then, our critics ask scornfully. Indeed, what’s the point of medieval history if it doesn’t solve the problems of MRSA? What do thousands of years of philosophy contribute to solving climate change?

Universities have been variously told to prove their worth as social-includers, skills-brokers, community coherers and contributors to UK plc. Academics have to prove how their subjects practically benefit the employability of their students and intellectual inquiry and academic research have been hemmed in by the demand that they produce useful outcomes.

> The modern Labour Party has made virue of its post-ideological status and boasts of its pragmatic remaking beyond the old left and right divide

The new fashion for evidence-based government might imply this is a political elite that regards research with high regard - unfortunately it more often demands that academia dangerously prostitutes its independence to deliver advocacy research, useful as ‘proof’ that such-and-such a policy is right. The ‘initiativitus’ of this administration might imply an over-abundance of ideas - and yet it actually reflects intellectual promiscuity and an episodic and pragmatic attachment to ideas. Kite-flying schemes come and go, one day vigorously argued for, the next day unceremoniously dumped. Who remembers Ed Balls’ ‘little red book’ that was hailed as a revolution for schools?

But there is more to Labour’s crisis of ideas than utilitarian philistinism. After all, the modern Labour Party has made a virtue of its post-ideological status and boasts of its pragmatic remaking beyond the old left and right divide. It has even expressed hostility to adversarial clashes between opposing ideas. Remember the last time we heard so much about the need to reform parliament? Tony Blair’s modernising project included abolishing the second PMQs to minimise the alleged tribal clashes between parties which, it was argued, put ordinary people off politics. It was even suggested that ‘Blair’s babes’ would add a softer, less aggressive edge to political debate. But without this public ‘battle of ideas’, what ideas are voters to choose between?

Instead this is the era of consensual big tents and a government of all the talents, regardless of political allegiance, based on an opportunistic ‘what works’ approach to running society. Ironically, this conviction-lite model of government has precisely fed the popular outrage over the expenses scandal. When being a parliamentarian is seen as merely a career with no obvious sign of commitment to ideas or ideals as motivation, the public assume the only reason MPs might go into politics is for the money.

The scorn and cynicism afforded to ‘dangerous idealism’ indicates just how we have limited the political imagination to the art of the possible. But utopian thinking is an important expression of the desire to make the world a better place. It stems from a belief that mankind’s problems are solvable. It is premised on the optimistic idea that human beings can build a society that is an improvement on that which we have now.

Labour has resigned itself to the narrow politics of managerialism, making a tweak here or there with little concept of transformative, radical change. Instead ideas were charged with the limited task of modest tinkering on the surface.

But we should never underestimate the power of ideas. I’d rather today’s political elite looked less to Keynsianism to solve the problems of the economy and more took inspiration from Keynes’ pertinent quote: “The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influence, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist.”

Ideas do matter and can help to shape the world. But in order for this to become a reality we have to dump instrumentalism, turn our back on pragmatism and argue that idealism can lead us to create a better future, and that humanity can create history. ■

Everything is new

By thinking about issues that didn’t exist in 1997, Labour can break out of tired old debates and start to think afresh, says Nick Anstead

Nick Anstead
is a lecturer in politics at the University of East Anglia in Norwich. His research is focused on the relationship between political institutions, new technology and civil society.

In their majestic, tongue-firmly-in-cheek account of British history, 1066 and All That, Sellar and Yateman note that the Wars of the Roses were started by the Barons to maintain feudalism and “stave off the Tudors for a time.” The joke is, of course, that we construct history after it happens. In reality, the Barons had no way of predicting the onset of the Tudor era. And we still tend to simplify history down to specific dates and individuals, instead of thinking about more subtle social and technological trends that take place over a period of years. While predicting how the past will be thought of in the future is a dangerous game, it does seem possible that the great credit crash of 2008-2009 will play a similar role.

In 1973, Harvard academic Daniel Bell argued that the industrial era, defined by the production of material goods, was in the process of being superseded by the post-industrial age, where advanced economies would become much more reliant on service industries. His predictions turned out to be accurate for much of the western world. In the UK, the success of the financial sector before the crunch was the definitive example of post-industrialism, not only because it became an important part of the economy in its own right, but also because it provided the affordable credit needed to fuel consumer spending.

For this reason, the credit crunch might be seen as the Bosworth Field of post-industrialism. But, like that battle, the recent humbling of the banking industry did not take place in isolation, but is instead part of a far wider web of ongoing change. In particular, the information revolution (a process that we have barely embarked on yet) will challenge many aspects of the post-industrial settlement, especially the rampant individualism it bred, and could lead to a new era defined by interaction and networks of collaboration.

Such a projection of the future has huge ramifications for politics. Conceived in the early 90s, New Labour was a creature of the post-industrial era. While recognisably social democratic in its concerns, there was a strong focus on competence and valence political issues, coupled with a commitment to light-touch regulation of the private sector and the introduction of new public management strategies (such as competition) into the state sector.

Now though, with the decline of post-industrialism and the emergence of the digital society, these ideas suddenly look very jaded. While documents such as the Digital Britain report offer interesting responses to the challenges posed by new technology, the approach offered is still largely piecemeal because, as yet, there has been little thought at the ideological level, considering what it actually means to be a social democrat in a networked society. In the coming years, such an intellectual project is going to become increasingly urgent.

Where, for example, is the line between the individual and the collective, the private and the public? An orthodox (if broad brush) reading of the current debate on the left

would suggest that New Labour has increasingly focused on the private consumer, while its critics favour the idea of the public-orientated citizen. Yet these neat distinctions are now being blurred; the old battles of the 1990s that some hope to revive in a post New Labour inquest are no longer relevant. Consumption, for example, is increasingly a collective act, with websites such as eBay or Amazon publishing and amalgamating the reviews of millions of shoppers. Also, the terms on which people are able to take part in civic life are evolving. New modes of activism, giving citizens far more control over how and when they participate, suggest that collective action is become increasingly individualised in its forms. Where do these new models of activity fall on the old left-right spectrum? Can they even be categorised in this way? As the world changes, so must our thinking.

The position of the state will also continue to evolve. Different elements of the left have offered radically different analysis of government and state power – some seeing it as fundamentally coercive, others arguing that state intervention is the only mechanism capable of achieving social justice. More recently, and especially under New Labour, the latter position has been coupled with a desire for efficiency, one of the great political shibboleths of post-industrialism. A logical conclusion of this process is that the government is now employing new technologies to gather and process information. The database state offers remarkable opportunities to improve public services such as healthcare, education and policing, but simultaneously poses huge dangers to privacy and civil liberties. This is true even if we assume that the state is a benevolent actor, since information, once gathered and collated, can always be lost or abused by individuals with access. For this reason, social democrats need to revisit fundamental questions about the role and objectives of the state, examining how governments gather and use data. Certainly, we must go beyond the idea, most evident in Labour's misguided support for ID cards, that "more information is always better" simply because it aids the public sector.

In the wake of the credit crunch, it will also be fundamental to ask what role progressives now envisage for markets. While New Labour defined itself as being comfortable with the marketplace, it seems likely that the financial markets of the future will be subject to far more stringent regulation. However, it is important that the left does not retreat into its ideological comfort zone. In simple terms, a market is nothing more than a mechanism for people to collectively make decisions through the deployment of their individual resources, a description which sounds remarkably like the principle that powers Google search engine, for example. Furthermore, when harnessed by Wikipedia or the open source software movement, this form of simultaneously individualised but collaborative endeavour fundamentally challenges more traditional capitalist modes of production, embodied by multinationals such as Microsoft. This idea, sometimes termed the Wisdom of the Crowds, can therefore be a powerful engine for democracy and the dissemination of power. The challenge for progressives in the digital era is to conceive then realise institutions that harness these ideas

In any kind of political discussion, it is important not to confuse fundamental values – such as a desire for social justice or a belief in a strong civil society – with the mechanisms that are used to achieve them. The former are constants across time and space, the latter can change in response to circumstances. Indeed, everyone in politics has a moral responsibility to constantly re-assess the means they propose to achieve their vision of the good society. To fail to do so is the fast road to becoming irrelevant and letting down the very ideas we purport to serve. ■

what not to spend

All political parties face tough choices on spending in straitened economic times. Those on the left find this particularly hard to come to terms with, with the gut instinct to hammer 'Tory cuts' leaving 'Labour cuts' anathema. But perhaps the recession offers an opportunity: to not spend money on things that should never have been supported in the first place. So, in these unusual times, could we see the dawn of a positive 'radical cuts' agenda that is a cause for celebration rather than handwringing?

ID Cards and Trident are the most frequently recommended in this vein; we asked a wide range of politicians, journalists and thinkers for other eye-catching ideas for creative and progressive ways to save money. It's amazing how many still came back with ID Cards and Trident. Not all, however, and below we feature some of the most interesting ideas.

Let Them Eat Pret…

Liz Thorne is the London Development Manager for End Child Poverty.

The House of Commons is home to twelve restaurants, five bars and one cafeteria, each heavily subsidised at a total cost of £3.8 million pounds to the tax payer each year. Just one of these, the cafeteria, is open to unaccompanied members of the public.

Over 350 employees serve the 646 MPs, their staff, invited guests and other parliamentary staff in the eighteen outlets. The Refreshments Department admits that the staff costs alone amount to more than the income received from their customers.

In the current furore over expenses, unnecessary perks such as these must surely be the first to go.

Despite recent improvements in the efficiency, the subsidy provided by the public purse still covers over one third of the costs incurred.

A report written by the Department three years ago states that buffet-style canteens were already proving more popular than the out-dated dining halls, but that "influential" MPs proved resistant to change. At least two of the fine dining restaurants, complete with bone china plates and exclusive waiter service, still remain.

There is legitimate demand for areas for quick snacks, formal meetings and the already profitable banqueting service, and for affordable meals for parliamentary staff; but the abundance of exclusive eateries, operating at a significant loss adds to an impression that MPs are secluded in ivory towers and detached from the people they serve. **Coaxing them out of Westminister and encouraging more of them to enter the wider world at lunchtime, as well as being economically sound, would demonstrate a positive shift in the 'us' and 'them' divide.** MPs would do well to support the abolition of these food subsidies.

In the current recession, this burden of £3.8 million – over £10,000 a day – is an unnecessary extravagance and will be viewed as unjustifiable by many. My advice? Let them dine from white china and stainless steel; let them self-serve and self-cater; let them exit the House of Commons; let them eat Pret.

Narrowing the CAP

Hopi Sen is a Labour blogger

Currently, the Labour Government reluctantly operates a set of policies which transfer money from poor families and communities to wealthy landowners. **If we want to reduce public spending, why not embrace a policy that reduces subsidies, lowers tariffs, helps poorer countries and lowers the cost of food?**

Today, the EU's Single Payment Scheme sends taxpayers' money directly to landholders. Impoverished farmers like the Queen get half a million pounds a year, say farmsubsidy.org, and Prince Adam of Lichtenstein gets a million euros. Who pays for this largesse? The rest of us do, to the tune of £5 billion a year.

Higher food prices from tariffs cost British families roughly the same again. Tariff walls are set up around Europe, preventing competition from developing countries. A non-EU sheep farmer has to pay 173 per cent on lamb exports.

This has three effects. First, British families pay higher prices. Second, overseas farm workers lose income. Third, EU agricultural producers benefit from higher margins. These are not small farmers, but major agricultural combines.

None of this can be rectified alone. Some on the left shy away from publicly opposing agricultural subsidies and tariffs because foaming at the mouth about the CAP is the province of little Englanders and Sun leader-writers. But this is not about trashing the EU; that would be disastrous and leave our farmers undercut by the subsidies of others. To save money while being fair to our farmers we must be at the heart of Europe, working with allies to achieve a reduction in agriculture spending.

Britain should begin by ensuring that the pressure on agriculture budgets is significantly downward. We could target reducing payments to those with substantial wealth. We should be at the forefront of reducing tariffs. We could be the voice in Europe for cheaper food and lower spending.

Help the poor; cut food inflation; save taxpayers billions.

Be honest about pensions

Gisela Stuart is the MP for Birmingham Edgbaston and a trustee of the Henry Jackson Society.

There used to be a deal: modest wages in exchange for job security and a pension where the benefits are defined and index linked. But we have now lost sight of this, and the difference between what is happening in private sector and public sector pensions is no longer sustainable.

Defined benefit pension schemes for private companies have become too expensive for companies to bear. No new schemes are being created and increasing numbers of firms close schemes not just to new entrants, but to existing members as well.

But the public sector is lagging behind the private sector in facing up to this new reality. It is unreasonable and politically unsustainable to expect these same taxpayers who are seeing great changes in their pension provision to continue to pick up the tab for maintaining what are in effect defined benefit schemes in the public sector.

A shift to funded schemes in the public sector can't happen overnight and would need to be phased in, but it has to be done. Anyone in their thirties has to accept that things have to change. It's better to plan ahead and be honest with people.

We need to spell out just how much public sector pension debt has been accumulated and make the pension element an explicit part of the salary package.

Politicians and those in charge in Whitehall ought to give a lead by closing their own system to new entrants and make the kind of provisions they expect from those in the private sector.

Keep it brief

David Walker is managing director, communications at the Audit Commission and formerly editor of the Guardian's Public magazine

The public sector is prolix. That's usually because process matters in public bureaucracies and procedures generate words. But risk aversion, back covering and other unattractive attributes of government kick in, generating yet more words. And the words generate paper and papers consume time, lengthening the chain that stretches between political intention and service delivery.

I've been oppressed since joining the public sector nine months ago by the volume of unnecessary words. Bodies like the one I work for are partly responsible. We help create an audit culture which puts safety first, and all the paperwork that goes with assurance and risk management. It's not just that there are too many words, but that the words themselves are too often empty and formulaic. I've got a little list, except it's not little. As well as Americanised management speak ('stepping up to the plate'), public sector prose is peppered with 'effective', 'transformational' and, yes, lazy and flatulent words such as 'diversity'.

Accountability creates paperwork. We have to accept that public bodies will always do more reporting than private companies; in a media culture where anti-state views are dominant, journalists will demand much more from public bodies than the private sector.

Here's my proposal. The words generated by public bodies could safely be cut in half. Dyslexic government ministers who refused to look at anything in their red boxes longer than a side of A4 had a point. **Compression is good for clarity and clarity isn't just good for decision making, it could save money. Imagine how much less time would be spent in meetings if no single agenda paper were more than 400 words in length.**

Meetings themselves spawn paper. Say every public sector manager (one million people, or about 20 per cent of the UK public sector workforce) immediately cut the number of meetings they call by half. Perhaps fewer managers would be needed; perhaps they could use the freed-up time to 'manage' or – God forbid – think about what they are doing and how well they are doing it.

Means-test your way out of a recession

Zoe Williams is a columnist for The Guardian

I am on a bit of a crusade at the moment against unnecessary spending in the arena of maternity and childcare. Straight off, I would can the £190 maternity benefit (this is universal) and the Child Trust Fund (keeping the £500 to poorer families, but losing the universal £250). I have reservations about Children's Centres: there is a sense that they've been colonised by the middle-classes and don't do enough for the families they were intended for. The free nursery place allowance is useless for parents who actually work; indeed, at five weekly sessions of two and a half hours each (they cannot even run back-to-back, under the rules), they accommodate no parental activity I can think of, apart from freelance journalism. If that's all the Government can afford, its universality should be abandoned, and genuine full-time free nursery places offered to parents who are struggling to afford childcare and hold down jobs.

The issue underpinning this is that means-tested benefits were abandoned in haste, by a government that had more money than sense, and nowhere is this more obvious than in Labour's family measures. **A daft situation has emerged in which so much money is wasted on universal benefits** (and I even include the apparently sacrosanct weekly Child Benefit here) **that more tailored schemes – the Childcare tax credit – are underfunded.** This tax credit, paradoxically, forces

what not to spend

John Mann MP:

We should let Boris Johnson fund Crossrail, not taxpayers in the North of England.

Denis MacShane MP:

Put a block on any pay above that of the Prime Minister for all paid by the taxpayer.

James Harkin, Director of Talks at the ICA:

Scrap community support officers - they don't seem to do much for either communities or policing, but do a lot of standing around hassling teenagers for not having bike lights.

Michael Gapes MP:

Abolish the House of Lords and become unicameral like New Zealand, Sweden and Norway.

Steve Pound MP:

The Barnett Formula has united everyone in opposition to it and clearly needs to be reviewed, recast and recalibrated.

Deborah Mattinson, Chime:

Use Citizens' Juries and Forums as both a sensible way to decide spending priorities, and as a way of re engaging people with the political process.

Mary Dejevsky, Columnist for The Independent:

The cost of any outside management consultancy employed by any section of the civil service must be matched in advance by a corresponding reduction in staff costs internally.

Chris Leslie, Director New Local Government Network:

Merge Whitehall fiefdoms into more cost effective units: for instance, create a proper Department for Constitutional Affairs subsuming CLG, Wales and Scotland Offices, Northern Ireland Office, Cabinet Office and half the Ministry of Justice.

Iain Dale, Blogger:

We should be looking at culling the burgeoning Quangocracy: Let's cut their total number by 20 per cent and let's cut their budgets across the board by 10 per cent.

low-income parents back into unemployment because it's not enough to cover childcare completely, and that shortfall makes work itself an extravagance.

Straitened times are exactly when we should revisit the whole philosophy of universal benefits, and see whether or not the disadvantages of means-testing can be solved piece-by-piece, rather than just abandoning the whole idea.

Reform pensions, save £45bn

Frank Field is the MP for Birkenhead. You can follow his blog at www.frankfield.co.uk

Cuts in public expenditure are required to prevent the currency collapsing as a result of a gilt strike. Radicals should welcome such an opportunity to achieve objectives that were never achieved during a period when public expenditure grew at undreamt of rates. A cut by a radical government could set the course to abolish pensioner poverty and take £45bn or so out of the bottom line of the public accounts.

I have been lobbying the Government to adopt a reform building a funded scheme around the state pay-as-you-go retirement pension. The aim would be, over time, to ensure a minimum pension, taking every pensioner out of poverty. It would mean individuals saving more for their retirement but they would do so in the knowledge that their savings would be buying a guaranteed wage-indexed pension.

The reform would then kick in mega public expenditure savings. The sharply rising means-test bill for pensioners – now at £15bn – would be set on a downward course. With a minimum pension in place the £30bn tax subsidy for pension savings could be phased out over a couple of decades. Here is £45bn out of the bottom line over two decades – and **this sum alone might prevent the Government collapsing due to the inability one week to sell another shed load of debt.**

Halt the rise of CCTV

James Macintyre is the political correspondent for the New Statesman

It is Labour's responsibility to come up with radical alternative cuts to counter the likely 'Tory cuts' to spending on basic public services.

As well as abandoning ID cards the Government should abandon the expansion of CCTV which – besides being authoritarian – has been shown repeatedly to be ineffective when it comes to preventing crime.

Last year, police themselves admitted the cameras – of which there is one for every 12 people in the UK – helped solve only 3 per cent of London's street robberies. Last month a review of 44 research studies, carried out by the Campbell Collaboration, showed cameras had little or no effect on cutting crime. One 2007 study in Cambridge found that 30 cameras in the city centre had no effect.

And yet, the UK's CCTV network is the largest in the world, and its expansion is the most heavily-funded and costly 'crime-prevention' measure outside the criminal justice system. As the Campbell Collaboration put it: "Over the last decade, CCTV accounted for more than three quarters of total spending on crime prevention by the British Home Office."

So there is a practical, enlightened self-interested reason for scrapping CCTV expansion. The recession offers the excuse. But, as ever, it would be preferable if Labour embraced the civil-libertarian cause with enthusiasm. The intelligence of the electorate should not be underestimated. They may not all be progressive or liberal. But nor will many sympathise with needless authoritarianism.

Stop ministers using official cars

Chris Mullin is the MP for Sunderland South. He recently published a volume of diaries entitled "AView from the Foothills".

I would reduce the size of the Government car pool. Only Cabinet ministers requiring security should be entitled to an official car as of right. The rest should be allowed to use the pool only on the basis of need.

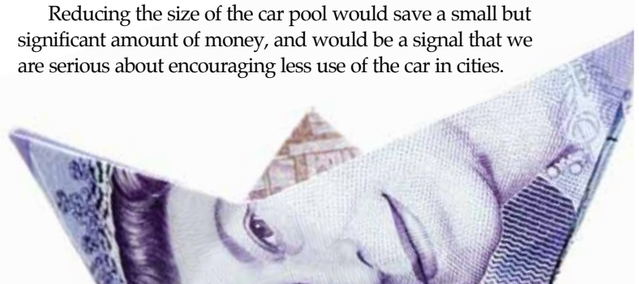
The present system is hugely wasteful. At the moment every minister, permanent secretary and some other senior officials have the use of an official car and driver, but for most of the day they are unused. Ministerial cars spend much of the day parked either in Speaker's Court or outside their minister's department.

The entire system is predicated on maximum use of the car. Government chauffeurs earn a low basic wage and rely on overtime to make up their salary. They are, therefore, happy to be kept hanging around.

What often happens is that a minister forms a close relationship with his or her driver and soon starts inventing things for them to do so they can maximise their earnings. Over the years I have come across several ministers who ask to be collected from their constituency each Sunday evening and driven to London, just to keep their driver in overtime. Some also have their red boxes delivered by car during recesses, even though the Post Office operates a perfectly reliable delivery service for a fraction of the cost.

When I was first made a minister in July 1999 I was horrified to discover that the Government Car Service was charging my office almost £1,000 a week for an official car and driver for which I had no use, but it proved extremely difficult to shake off.

Reducing the size of the car pool would save a small but significant amount of money, and would be a signal that we are serious about encouraging less use of the car in cities.



Putting ownership back on the table

Ownership has not been central to social democratic thinking for generations. But it should be central to what comes next, says Stuart White.

Stuart White
is a lecturer and tutor in Politics and Director of the Public Policy Unit at Oxford University

Social democracy is a movement for a more equal, and thereby more free, society. But what policies and institutions are important in achieving a society of free and equal citizens?

At the turn of the last century, social democrats would unhesitatingly have said that changes in the ownership and control of wealth are fundamental to the project. On the one hand, they looked to the rise and continued growth of the cooperative sector as a route to the just society. On the other, they focused on ownership of productive assets by the state at both local and central levels. In the course of the twentieth century, however, the social democratic imagination contracted. The commitment to widespread public ownership was jettisoned, for good reasons, by the revisionists of the Labour Party in the 1950/60s. They sought to replace it with a distinctively social democratic conception of a 'property-owning democracy' (Jackson, 2005). But this made little headway in the party and, following the rise and fall of Bennism, a strategy for radically reforming the distribution and control of wealth effectively dropped out of Labour's social vision.

As part of the task of renewal, Labour needs urgently to bring questions of ownership back into its field of vision, and to do so explicitly. One can see some modest first steps in this direction under New Labour. But the steps remain too modest relative to the challenges we face, and they are not informed by a coherent sense of what an alternative egalitarian capitalism – or post-capitalism – might look like.

There are a number of reasons why this is so crucial now. First, wealth inequality in the UK is very high (higher than income inequality): as of 2003, the wealthiest 1 per cent owned 21 per cent of marketable wealth, the least wealthy 50 per cent owned 7 per cent of marketable wealth (http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/personal_wealth/table13_5.pdf). Second, there is considerable asset poverty: absolute lack of financial assets. As of 2005/6, 35 per cent of UK families had no savings, and another 21 per cent had less than £1,500 in savings (*Social Trends* 38, 2008, Table 5.21, p.76). Third, over the past couple of decades, wealth inequality has been rising. If we look at the Gini coefficient measure of inequality, averaging for five year periods since 1982, we get the following picture: 1982-86: 0.644; 1987-91: 0.648; 1992-96: 0.664; 1997-2001: 0.694; 2002-03: 0.690.

Wealth inequality matters because the ownership of financial assets is important to personal freedom and to equality of opportunity. Assets are important to freedom, firstly, because they give individuals material independence – holding wealth of one's own, one is less dependent on others. One can more readily walk away from abusive employers or spouses because one has some resources of one's own to draw on. Assets are also important, second, in enabling people to approach life in a creative spirit. Those who hold assets are able to ask themselves "What do I want to do with my life?" in a way that many of those without assets simply are not. Related to this, assets confer all kinds of opportunity, for example, to set up a business, to move, to undertake new training or simply to take time out from the labour market so that one can maintain one's vitality. A society is unlikely to achieve the ideal of equality of opportunity unless it achieves a modicum of equality in asset ownership. Particularly important, both for individual creativity and equality of opportunity, is asset ownership in one's early adult life when so many important life-shaping decisions are made.

The issue is not simply how wealth is distributed, however, but how it is controlled. We are in the middle of a deep economic recession precipitated by irresponsible lending practices by financial institutions. A large amount of the wealth at play in financial markets is owned by large institutional investors, such as pension funds, which draw their underlying wealth from the mass of wage workers. But workers who pay into pension funds typically have very little control over how their investments are used. Their investments are deployed in the market in ways that can contribute to the kind of crisis that has unfolded in the past couple of years. The same workers may then be on the receiving end of the job cuts and other costs associated with the recession. As Robin Blackburn has argued, contemporary capitalism involves a form of alienation of the worker from her

own savings: the savings become an entity separate from the worker and are thrown out to seek profit in ways that can hurt the worker's own interests (Blackburn, 2002).

Before considering some specific policies to address these issues, it will help to step back for a moment and consider the kind of social vision which might inform policy-making. Of immense help here are two thinkers: on the one hand, the greatest political philosopher of the twentieth century, John Rawls; on the other, the Nobel laureate economist, James Meade.

Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*, first published in 1971, can be seen as the culmination of a century's rumination on the liberal left about the content of social justice and, in particular, on how to integrate the claims of liberty and equality. It is in the tradition of John Stuart Mill, Leonard Hobhouse and R H Tawney. As Rawls makes clear in the introduction to the revised edition of the book, a society of free and equal citizens is not achieved merely by 'welfare-state capitalism'. It requires either a 'liberal socialism' or what he terms 'property-owning democracy':

> *'...the background institutions of property-owning democracy, with its system of (workably) competitive markets, tries to disperse the ownership of wealth and capital, and thus to prevent a small part of society from controlling the economy and indirectly political life itself. Property-owning democracy avoids this, not by redistributing income to those with less at the end of each period, so to speak, but rather by ensuring the widespread ownership of productive assets and human capital...at the beginning of each period....The idea is not simply to assist those who lose out through accident or misfortune (although this must be done), but instead to put all citizens in a position to manage their own affairs and to take part in social cooperation on a footing of mutual respect under appropriately equal conditions.'* (Rawls 1999, p.xv.)

Rawls's conception of 'property-owning democracy' derives from the work of James Meade, a close associate of the Labour revisionists of the 1950s/60s. In its most fully developed form, Meade's model of property-owning democracy has four key elements (Meade, 1989):

(1) *Mutualistic firms*. Firms take diverse forms but generally use profit-sharing and revenue-sharing mechanisms to determine pay.

(2) *Capital receipts tax*. Wealth is taxed across as it is passed across the generations. The tax falls on the recipient of the wealth transfer and depends on how large the transfer is and how much wealth the individual has already acquitted by such transfers.

(3) *Community fund*. The community (local and central government) owns a large share of the nation's productive assets (say, 50 per cent). The dividends and capital gains on this portfolio are then distributed among the population.

(4) *Social dividend*. The return on the community fund is used to pay a uniform grant to all citizens.

What Meade envisages here is a market economy but one in which the class division of capitalist society is substantially attenuated. A large share of the return to capital is directly dispersed back to the population as a uniform grant. Some capital remains privately owned, but the tax-benefit system works to promote a wide dispersion in the ownership of this capital. The interests of capital and labour are better aligned at the firm level by means of profit-sharing and related measures. Capital's power over labour is also limited by the social dividend which reduces the dependency of an individual worker on selling her labour-power to an employer. We do not necessarily have to sign up to Meade's model in all its details, of course. But it represents the kind of 'big picture' thinking about the economy which social democratic – or, at least Labour Party – thinking has for too long lacked. It offers a reasonably concrete ideal against which we can consider individual policies.

So, keeping Meade's model in mind, what sort of policies might Labour – or some progressive cross-party coalition – adopt to address the problems of wealth distribution and control identified above? I will briefly note three possible areas for policy development here.

(1) *The citizen's inheritance*. The lack of wealth can be addressed directly by endowing all citizens on maturity with a decent sum of financial assets: a citizen's inheritance. This is a variation on Meade's idea of a social dividend, except that the grant takes the form of capital rather than a periodic income. New Labour has in fact taken the first crucial step in this direction by introducing the Child Trust Fund (CTF). The state gives all citizens a small sum at birth (and a further sum at age seven) which is invested and accumulates as they grow up. Families may also contribute into the fund. Once put in, monies cannot be withdrawn from the fund, ensuring that all citizens will receive some capital of their own at age 18. New Labour has also introduced the Saving Gateway. This provides matching subsidies to poor households who save into special accounts (the proposed match rate is 50 per cent, i.e., the government will put 50p into the account for every £1 saved by the household). This directly addresses the problem of widespread asset poverty.

A first priority is to defend these existing policies, at least until something better is proposed. The Liberal Democrats remain committed to abolishing the CTF, disparaging it as a 'gimmick', apparently oblivious of how the policy coheres with their own philosophy and historic commitments. It is unclear how deep Conservative support for such policies is. One can all too easily imagine a future Conservative government cutting them given the present crisis in the public finances. However, these policies do stand in need of development. In the case of the CTF, for example, the decision to allow families to contribute into the accounts (up to an annual ceiling) could lead to individuals receiving highly unequal amounts of capital on maturity, compromising the policy's support for equality of opportunity. If the CTF is to become the basis for an effective citizen's inheritance, at least two further measures seem necessary. First, it is important to increase the initial state endowments into the CTF from the current rather low sum of £250 (rising to £500 for children in poorer families). Second, it is important to help low-income households save more into their children's accounts so as to prevent substantial inequalities at age 18. Here the principle of matched savings, familiar from the Saving Gateway, is again relevant; as David White of the Children's Mutual has argued, the state should match the savings of low-income households into their children's accounts, and at a generous rate.

Thinking more radically, one might look at certain existing public expenditures and consider whether it would be fairer to divert these into a citizen's inheritance. Take subsidies to higher education. These subsidies benefit those in the top half of the academic ability range and disproportionately benefit young adults from higher social classes. Would it perhaps be fairer to use the funds instead to finance a generous capital grant for all young adults on maturity? It is hard to see what social democratic principle of equity justifies giving the lion's share of public spending on young adults to the most academically inclined (who, as said, also tend to come disproportionately from higher social classes).

Social democrats need to ask again what sort of economy they fundamentally want. Then they need to consider how measures to manage the economic crisis might help in constructing this alternative economy

(2) *The fair taxation of wealth*. The flip-side of the citizen's inheritance is the fair taxation of wealth and wealth transfers. One obvious anomaly here at present is the lower rate of tax on capital gains relative to income, a standing invitation to the high-paid to take their pay in the form of wealth, e.g., shares, rather than wages. It is also vital to defend the principle of inheritance tax. However, there is also a strong case for reforming the tax. At present, the tax is based on the size of the taxable estate at death. In principle, it seems much more congruent with the egalitarian aims of the tax to follow Meade's proposal for a capital receipts tax: to make the transfer recipient pay the tax based on how much they receive by way of inheritance or gift and how much they have already received in these ways. As Meade argued, this gives donors a modest incentive to spread their assets more widely to minimise the tax take. It is certainly more complex and expensive to administer than the present tax. But experience from the Republic of Ireland, which has operated such a tax since the 1970s, suggests these problems are not insuperable.

A fuller discussion would also need to consider proposals for land value tax and for ways of publicly sharing out the value of environmental assets. An interesting example here is the suggestion for personal, tradable carbon use allowances (floated not so long ago by David Miliband). As Polly Toynbee describes the policy:

> "Give every citizen the same quota of energy and let them buy and sell it on the open market. The half of the population who don't fly will make money from selling their quota to the half who do. Drive a gas-guzzling 4x4 and you will have to buy a quota from the third of the population with no access to a car. Who could complain about such transparent fairness? It is relatively easy to do: swiping a quota card to pay gas and electricity bills or buying petrol is a simpler transaction than Tesco's complex information on their loyalty card.…it in effect redistributes money from the rich to the poor, from the frequent flyers to never-flyers, with a parallel currency." (Toynbee, 2006)

(3) *Democratizing investment funds*. Third, we need to address the lack of democratic accountability in the control of investment funds. In California, the public employees' pension fund, CALPERS, uses its control of workers' savings to pursue a vigorous ethical investment strategy (see their website at http://www.calpers.ca.gov/). It is an example of how direct popular control over popular savings can be used to make investment decisions more socially responsible.

Robin Blackburn has set out some interesting ideas about how develop this approach. On the one hand, a social democratic government can seek to increase the direct accountability of institutional investors, such as pension funds, to their savers. Second, echoing an earlier proposal of James Meade, Blackburn calls for the state to impose a capital levy on firms, requiring them to issue new shares for a period to designated social funds. These social funds will then be controlled by management bodies which draw on trade unions and community groups (Blackburn, 2002). This can be seen as a variant on Meade's idea of the community fund, albeit with more emphasis on democratic accountability in the management of the fund.

Such ideas are clearly very radical. The Swedish Social Democrats attempted to move in this direction in the 1970s (under the so-called Meidner plan) and they were largely defeated. But context matters. We are, as said, in the midst of a deep economic recession, one which raises some basic questions about the merits of capitalism in its neo-liberal form. It is, of course, crucial to manage the crisis. But it is no less important to integrate crisis management with a longer term perspective. Social democrats need to ask again what sort of economy they fundamentally want. Then they need to consider how measures to manage the crisis might help in constructing this alternative economy. Proposals such as Blackburn's and Meade's are useful as benchmarks against which social democrats can assess the kind of reforms they would like to see come out of the present crisis.

Ownership was once central to social democratic politics. Over time it has been almost forgotten. This has left social democrats too reliant on other policies and institutions, such as public services, to deliver their ideal of a society of free and equal citizens. The time has come to bring ownership back in.

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Stuart White is a lecturer and tutor in Politics and Director of the Public Policy Unit at Oxford University.

Explaining the crisis

Eminent academic Andrew Gamble's treatise on the economic state we're in is a tour de force, says David Lipsey.

Photo: Huyuanjia/Rex Features

The Labour peer **David Lipsey** is a past chairman of the Fabian Society

The Spectre at the Feast

by Andrew Gamble

Palgrave Macmillan
£14.99

During my obligatory but brief Marxist flirtation in 1968, we revolutionaries knew what the crisis of capitalism was. The rate of return on capital was forced down, so wages were slashed; unemployment soared; and soon the working class marched triumphantly to power, massacring the ruling class on the way. (Though we were at Oxford preparing for our great careers, we assumed that they would spare sympathisers such as us).

That picture of what might happen bore no relation to crises past or present; still less any faint resemblance to what might happen in the future crisis now with us. For one thing, the pattern of economic growth has reduced the size of the working class as we thought of it. The residual working class has been decapitated, as its most able members have been drawn off into higher education. Its most effective representative organisations, the trade unions, have lost members, strength and legitimacy. Even the working class which remains seem more inclined to right wing solutions to crisis ('send the immigrants home') than to socialist solutions.

We don't yet know what the long-term social and political effects of the present crisis will be. But, as Andrew Gamble points out in this compelling book, they may well not favour the left. The Great Depression didn't. It gave the world Hitler. Stagflation in the 70s didn't. It gave Britain Thatcher. And for all Gordon Brown's argument that the policies people now want are more Labour than Tory, few will be confident that the voters will demonstrate that when the General Election comes.

Gamble starts with a conventional description of the present crisis. He then points out that the word 'crisis' itself has a number of meanings (for example in medicine it is the point at which the patient either begins to recover or dies).

A tour de force of summaries of the great thinkers on capitalism follows - yes, Hayek, Schumpeter, Keynes, Polyani and the rest, which illustrates the central theme of this book: the competition of analysts of different political persuasions to produce the most compelling narrative of what has happened. Few in the Labour Party probably come across it, for example, but there are swathes of economists, particularly in the United States, who view the crisis as a failure of too much government and regulation. Try not to laugh.

The final chapter – entitled "what is to be done?", though don't look there for a panacea – summarises the alternatives. Market fundamentalists – those who hold to the theory it is government's fault – want the swiftest return to the purest liberalism. National protectionists want strong states, more protectionism, fewer immigrants and a sustaining welfare state. Regulatory liberals argue that "the excesses of neo-liberalism have to be curbed and a new regulatory structure has to be set in place" to end "bubble finance." Cosmopolitan liberals want some form of global governance, which would tackle the central dilemma that the American economy is no longer strong enough to sustain the world economy on its own. Finally, those pale shadows of my 1968 self, the anti-capitalists, take to the streets in their sandals with a miasmic vision (or rather, being lefties, lots of competing miasmic visions) embracing not just the current crisis but international development, global warming, and world peace.

Professor Gamble is an academic, though of course an academic of the left, and he is careful to offer predictions of what might happen which span a wide spectrum. This is not a book of which, in forty years time, anyone is going to be easily able to say: 'did he really believe THAT?' Yet, with the benefit of the months between authorship ending and publication, I would hazard a few guesses of my own.

The crash has represented a victory for regulatory liberals. For it does now seem, with all fingers crossed, that the great depression that was in prospect has been averted; and green shoots are starting to look like saplings. Of course, this can still go wrong; but if it does not, it represents a triumph for the Keynesian approach to crisis, and for the ability of government, when its will is engaged, to use its powers to restore stability.

Less encouraging however is that it is by no means certain this approach will continue. Powerful forces in society want a return to the ancient regime as swiftly as possible. For example, the resistance to changes in the bonus culture were evident almost as soon as the assault upon it began. Gordon Brown apologised to the CBI for the 50 per cent income tax rate, as if tackling inequality was no part of his government's purpose.

Meanwhile some of the underlying forces that caused the crisis remain at work. Nothing, for example, has been done about China and the oil producers' payments surpluses, which in turn created an oversupply of savings and caused the financial system to go mad in search of returns on those savings. The necessary work of international institutional reconstruction has not proceeded far. Banks are being allowed to continue at once to be stolid depository organisations and adventurous investment organisations. Consumers of financial services, in Britain at least, are taking a poor second place as the authorities strive to do everything in their power to strengthen banking balance sheets (most simply done by allowing them to rip off their customers).

Of course, what the world needs in these circumstances is radical governments. America now has one (or at least it has a radical President). And Britain? For all Labour's tremendous achievements in dealing with the crash, we do not have such a government in office nor in prospect.

Waving not drowning

A host of big names declare New Labour dead in this new collection of essays, but Jessica Asato sees signs of life.

Jessica Asato is Acting Director of Progress

With a stellar cast of the great and the good of social democratic thinking and a title which promises a way out for those tired of New Labour orthodoxy, this book was always going to have a hard task in satisfying its audience. The grand project which led to three never-achieved-before victories for the Labour Party is now variously described as in need of reinvention, dying or dead. So a tome titled 'Beyond New Labour' leads the reader to wonder whether it will describe if it's possible to rejuvenate Blair's project, or whether it will argue that we need to take an axe to it and spell out what comes next.

It's not altogether surprising that this book struggles to do either of these things, but in spite of that, it is an impressive attempt at pulling together the various conundrums which have come to define New Labour's period in office, and the political, economic and societal dilemmas which those who care about the future of left politics in Britain need to take on board if the Labour movement is to remain a relevant force in UK politics. Broadly, the book contains three main themes: why New Labour's approach to market intervention is inadequate; how electoral, cultural and social change has altered the parameters of the left/right axis in politics; and the need for Labour to approach the issue of equality with greater clarity.

John Kay and Will Hutton explain the reasons why New Labour has become a victim rather than the master of markets. Kay writes: "In New Labour's acceptance of the market, there has been something of the zeal of the convert in the readiness to believe in market efficiency", while Hutton muses that in retrospect, "it seems amazing that anybody could ever have believed that the financial markets alone could pioneer a new economic future or believed for a nanosecond in the efficient market doctrine." According to Kay, this was because Gordon Brown's doctrine of market failure, was flawed as it was based on a "fundamental separation between economic and political spheres". However, some economic choices are "essentially collective and cannot be described as a summation of personal preferences" which means that issues such as top-up fees, funding the long-term care of the elderly, and executive remuneration cannot simply be answered by leaving it to the market. Kay does not

reject the use of the market in public services entirely, however, writing that "the ability of consumers to exercise choice raises standards" and that "the most effective means of getting a good school is to be able to reject a bad one".

This appears to work against calls from Labour's left that the problem New Labour faces is an obsession with introducing markets into public services, and if only it were to drop this focus on ensuring individuals are able to make a choice in receiving services, the public would come flocking back to the party. In fact as Peter Riddell's thorough analysis of the electoral landscape shows, what seems to matter to the public most is not ideological positioning, but competence. Riddell also suggests that the growing decline in support for greater redistribution and for left of centre positions particularly among Labour supporters, shows that "the Labour left's alternative of a return to redistribution and government intervention on behalf of 'our people', a core vote, class-based strategy, has few electoral attractions". At the same time, the UK has experienced massive change as Roger Liddle and Simon Latham's chapter describes in great detail, leaving traditional old labour vs new dichotomies looking a little irrelevant.

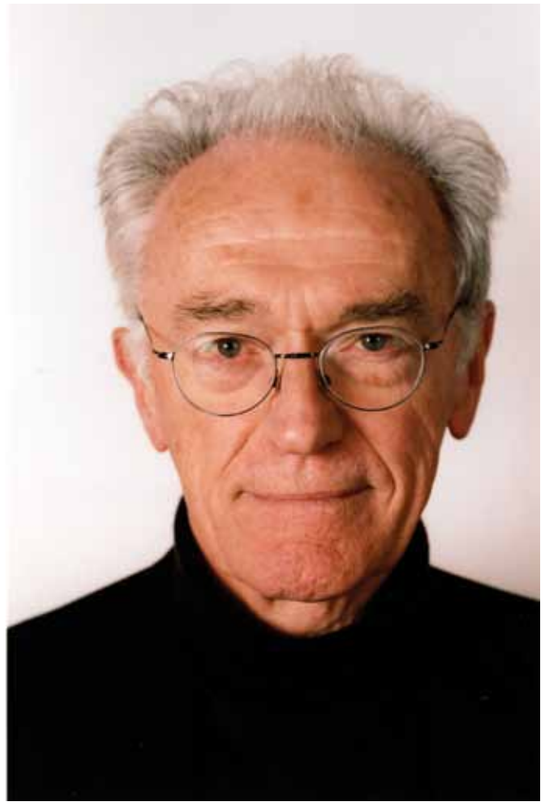
Instead, as the introduction argues, there is a new tension in social democracy which is emerging which divides into 'cosmopolitan' vs 'communitarian'. One area where this division can be seen is in Labour's approach towards migration and identity in Britain. As Hannah Jameson argues, "New Labour's response to diversity and identity has been largely piecemeal. The desire for increased immigration to support a flexible labour market and drive economic growth has meant having to reassure the majority over migration fears, often by deploying tough rhetoric." Yet that very rhetoric makes it difficult for new citizens to properly integrate. If Labour is going to remain a progressive, outward looking party, therefore, Jameson writes it will need to pursue "a greater civic identity, based on a renewed conception of citizenship". Neither the old left, nor New Labour, has satisfactorily developed such a basis for moving the debate forward.

Finally, what does the book have to say about the enduring debate around the question of how to tackle inequality? It concludes by suggesting that while New Labour has made "significant strides in reducing poverty", it also "under-estimated the profundity and complexity of the inequalities challenge in modern British society". Social democrats must address themselves to the question of "who deserves what in a socially diverse society" and "resolve an enduring dilemma in a new form: ensuring that the plight of the worst off resonates with the middle-class majority". So is New Labour the vehicle through which to make this change? The editors seem to suggest not: "it is our belief that a 'next generation' social democratic project for Britain is needed: not a reversion to traditionalism, nor a further revisionist project on the Crosland model". A third way perhaps? But at least the "next generation of Labour politicians" that Patrick Diamond and Roger Liddle are putting their faith in, "can draw on the success of the New Labour project, confident that the centre-left is able to win the battle of ideas and govern competently in the name of a more equal and just society". So perhaps New Labour is not dying, not dead, just different?

Beyond New Labour

Methuen
£14.99

Peter Townsend 1928-2009



The death of Fabian Vice President, Peter Townsend, in June robbed the Society of our greatest activist-thinker. The acute – and impeccable – social researcher (for whom government 'delivery' was a cause long before it became fashionable) co-edited two seminal Fabian books, which forensically reviewed the 1960s and 1970s Labour Governments.

Both works specifically looked at the impact of policies so as to improve the effectiveness of government – being influenced by the failure not just of will but by the inability of perfectly good legislative measures to produce the intended social reform. *Labour and Inequality* reviewed the 1966-70 Labour Government, whilst *Labour and Equality* took on the 1974-79 Governments, the latter giving greater attention to individual rights and outlining a broader concept of social policy. The first book documented the "sad fact" of the lack of impact on inequality, the second also recording the "intensively disappointing" outcome of five years' of government.

Townsend never wavered from the belief that it was the Labour Party which could – and should – "light a flame in a world of injustice and inequality", to use Peter and Nick Bosanquet's words. To his last moments he hoped and worked for a party and government which would radically change society.

Fabianism ran deep through the Townsend veins. In addition to his many Fabian publications and regular attendance at AGMs, schools and conferences, he chaired the Society's social policy committee from 1970 to 1982 (throughout my tenure at Dartmouth Street, which allowed me the great privilege of working close to such an icon for my generation of sociologists), and from 1966 to 1967, he chaired the Society during one of the most significant periods of its development.

Following the 1966 election (which returned a majority Labour Government), the Executive Committee decided that the Society should be the "Labour Party's friendly critic" and launched a series of debates with ministers. Fabians regarded such a dialogue between the Government and its thoughtful friends as essential – and expected ministers to listen even when the candour of friends speaking in a good cause became hurtful to them. Meanwhile, Peter, as Chairman, kicked off the traditional autumn lectures in 1966 with an attack on the Government's half-hearted approach to health and welfare services and to the poverty of large and fatherless families, as well as the Government's failure to live up to socialist and egalitarian principles.

The themes of poverty and equality both pre-dated Peter's Fabian books and continued to appear in the titles of nearly all his subsequent publications and positions with, later, a further broadening of his involvement to encompass the international dimension of social policy, which became a major driver by the end of his life. (Indeed, the title of his LSE Chair was Professor of International Social Policy.) His final Fabian writing was earlier this year when he contributed "The 2009 Minority Report on the World Bank" to the commemorative booklet for the 1909 Beatrice Webb's Minority Report on the Poor Law, *From the Workhouse to Welfare* – testimony to his lifelong devotion to eradicating the causes – and – effects, of poverty.

Peter Townsend was a thinker, an activist, a Fabian, an internationalist, a writer and a researcher. He was also generous of his time and concern for others, humane, and a great family man.

And his legacy to the Fabians and Labour? Never stop acting on poverty – or inequality.

Dianne Hayter, former General Secretary, Fabian Society

Listings

BIRMINGHAM
All meetings at 7.00 in the Birmingham and Midland Institute, Margaret Street, 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
17 – 19 July. Tolpuddle Rally
30 October. Martin Salter MP
27 November. Dr Alan Whitehead MP
Please also contact Ian Taylor if you are going to the House of Commons Tea on 7 July. All meetings at The Friends Meeting House, Wharncliffe Rd, Boscombe, Bournemouth at 7.30. **Contact Ian Taylor on 01202 396634 for details.**

BRIGHTON & HOVE
Regular meetings. **Details from Maire McQueeney on 01273 607910 email mairemcqueeney@waitrose.com**

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

CARDIFF AND THE VALE
14 July. Nick Davies and Darren Williams – authors of 'Clear Red Water: Welsh Devolution and Socialist Politics'
22 October. The Lady Morgan Lecture will be delivered by the Rt Hon Peter Hain MP
Details of all meetings from Jonathan Wynne Evans on 02920 594 065 or wynneevans@phonecoop.coop

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
30 April. Mike Parker on 'What Labour Could have done in Transport' 8.00 in the Committee room at Chiswick Town Hall
Details from Monty Bogard on 0208 994 1780, email mb014f1362@blueyonder.co.uk

CITY OF LONDON
For details contact Alan Millington on amillington@orrick.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
Regular meetings at 8.00 in the Ship, Green Street Green Rd 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
Sunday 2 August. Summer Garden Party. 1.00pm
September (date tbc) Visit to the Scottish National Library. **Details of this and 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 June Solomon on 0208 428 2623.** Fabians from other areas where there are no local Fabian Societies are very welcome to join us.

HAVERING
24 July. Cllr Kath MacGuirk. 8.00 at Roope Hall, Station Rd, Upminster.
August (date tbc) Evening Tour of the Olympic Site.
Details of all meetings from David Marshall email david.c.marshall.t21@btinternet.com tel 01708 441189

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

ISLINGTON
For **details of all meetings contact Pat Haynes on 0207 249 3679 or email Derek.sawyer@tiscali.co.uk**

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

MARCHES
New Society formed in Shrewsbury area. **Details on www.MarchesFabians.org.uk or 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 this and all other meetings Ellie Robinson on marieellie@aol.com

NORTH EAST WALES
Further details from Joe Wilson on 01978 352820

NORTHUMBRIA AREA
For details and booking contact Pat Hobson at pat.hobson@hotmail.com

NORTHAMPTON AREA
New Society forming. If you are interested in becoming a member of this new society, please **contact Dave Brede on davidbrede@yahoo.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
18 September. Dr Jonathan Perraton, Academic Economist, University of Sheffield on 'A Very Peculiar Crisis for Capitalism'. 7.30. Further information, Rob Murray on 0114 2558341 or Tony Ellingham on 0114 2745814.
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 2558341or Tony Ellingham on 0114 274 5814 email tony.ellingham@virgin.net**

SOUTH EAST LONDON
24 June. Fiona MacTaggart MP on 'Parliament and Prostitution'. Meet at 8.00 at 105 Court Lane, Dulwich London SE21 7EE
5 August 7.00. Summer Social with talk on Sewers by Brian Keegan.
30 September. Dan Whittle on 'Young People and Political Engagement'
28 October. Benni Dembitzer on 'The Forthcoming World Food Crisis'
For **details of all future meetings, please visit our website at http://mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk/selfs/ Regular meetings; contact Duncan Bowie on 020 8693 2709 or email duncanbowie@yahoo.co.uk**

SOUTHAMPTON AREA
10 July. Annual Summer Social in Gosport
11 September. Stephen Barnes-Andrews on 'The John Lewis Partnership'
For details of venues and all meetings, contact 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
For **details of all meetings, contact Peter Coghill on 01986 873203**

SURREY
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@dmu.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 OBG, 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**

WEST YORKSHIRE
Details from Jo Coles on Jocoles@yahoo.com

WIMBLEDON
New Society forming. **Please contact Andy Ray on 07944 545161or andyray@blueyonder.co.uk** if you are interested.

A note from Local Societies Officer, Deborah Stoate

The Local Societies House of Commons Tea is an annual event which attracts members from all over Britain. I suspect it's been happening for over 50 years and I would be grateful if any member could let me know if they can remember its inception.

It's a chance to meet other local members socially but is also a chance to participate in what is usually a memorable meeting. This year's all woman panel debated 'Changing the Culture of our Politics' – a serendipitous title, chosen months ago incidentally – and tea afterwards in the Members Dining Room gave Fabian MPs and Peers a chance to meet Local Fabians.

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

FABIAN EXECUTIVE ELECTIONS

Call for nominations

Closing date 10th August 2009

Nominations are now invited for:

- 15 Executive Committee places
- 4 Local Society places on the Executive
- Honorary Treasurer
- Scottish Convenor
- Welsh Convenor
- 12 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 14th November 2009. 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 and please confirm receipt. The closing date for nominations is 10th August 2009.

The global change we need

Lecture from the Foreign Secretary, Rt Hon David Miliband MP

7th November 2009 at Amnesty International UK.

More details to follow this summer…

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

We're conducting a survey of Fabian members which will inform debate at the next AGM.

Details will be sent via email: if you don't have online access, please write to Calix Eden, 11 Dartmouth Street, London, SW1H 9BN or phone 020 7227 4917 for more information.

AGM RESOLUTIONS

Any full member, national or local, may submit a resolution to the AGM. The deadline for resolutions is 10th August 2009. 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. Please contact Calix Eden at calix.eden@fabian-society.org.uk or phone 020 7227 4917 for more information about the above.

Community
THE UNION FOR LIFE

Labour

Proud of Labour

Community is fighting for a fourth term for Labour. We're proud to champion the progressive policies we've developed through the Labour Party that support our members:

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- The Minimum Wage
- Record investment in our communities, schools and hospitals
- Trade Union Recognition
- Equalities legislation

We're supporting Labour, you're supporting Labour...

....but who's supporting you?

Joining Community means support not just at work but in your local area, whether it's in the Labour Party or in a voluntary group. Community is:

- A union for where you live as well as where you work
- A traditional union for modern communities
- A century-old representative of working people
- A founding union of the Labour Party and a champion of progressive policies

Community supports people in workplaces as diverse as the NSPCC, betting shops, Action for Blind People, textiles factories and the steel industry. Community is ready to support you.

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