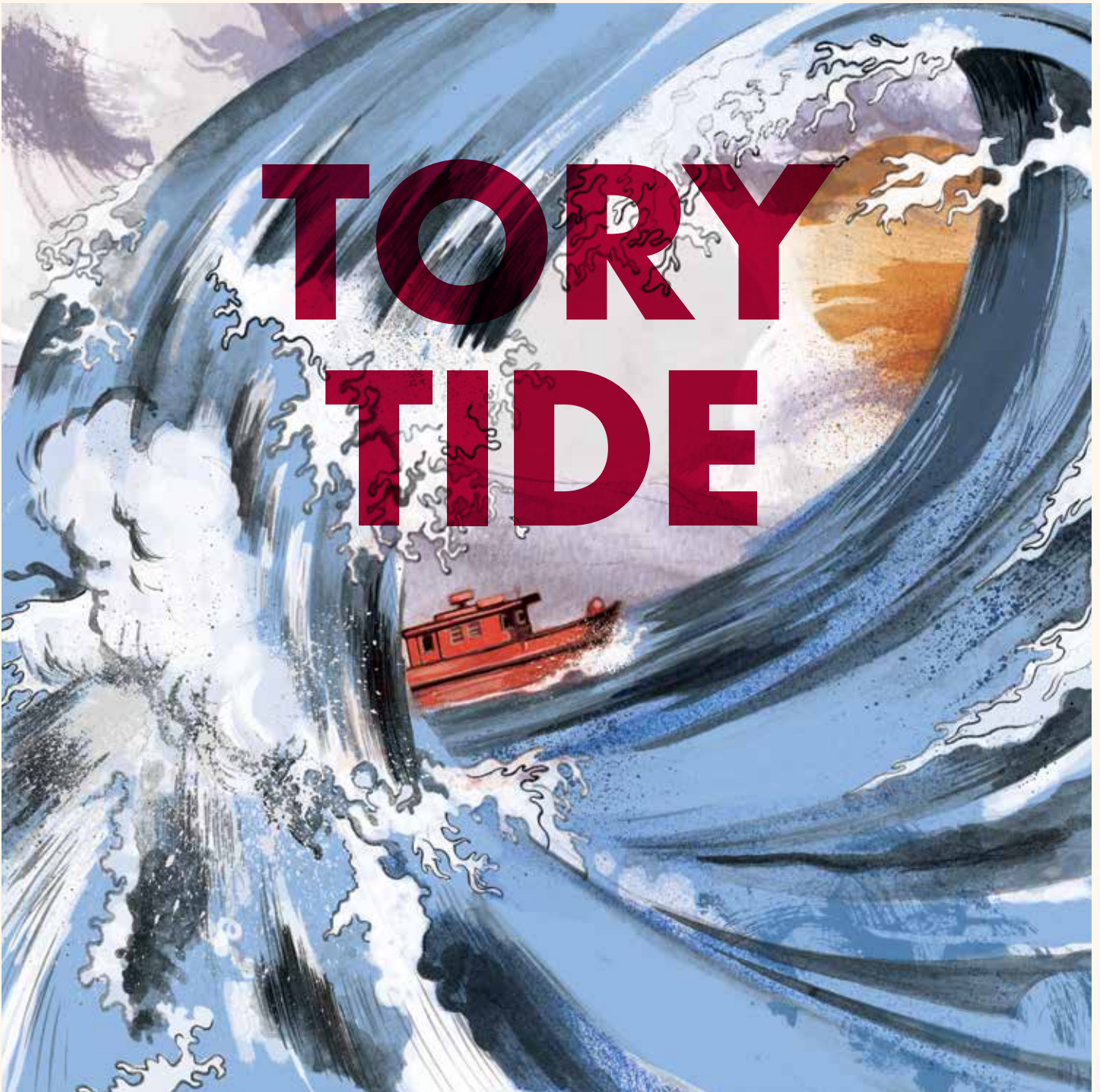


# FABIAN REVIEW

*The quarterly magazine of the Fabian Society*

*Spring 2014 / fabians.org.uk / £4.95*

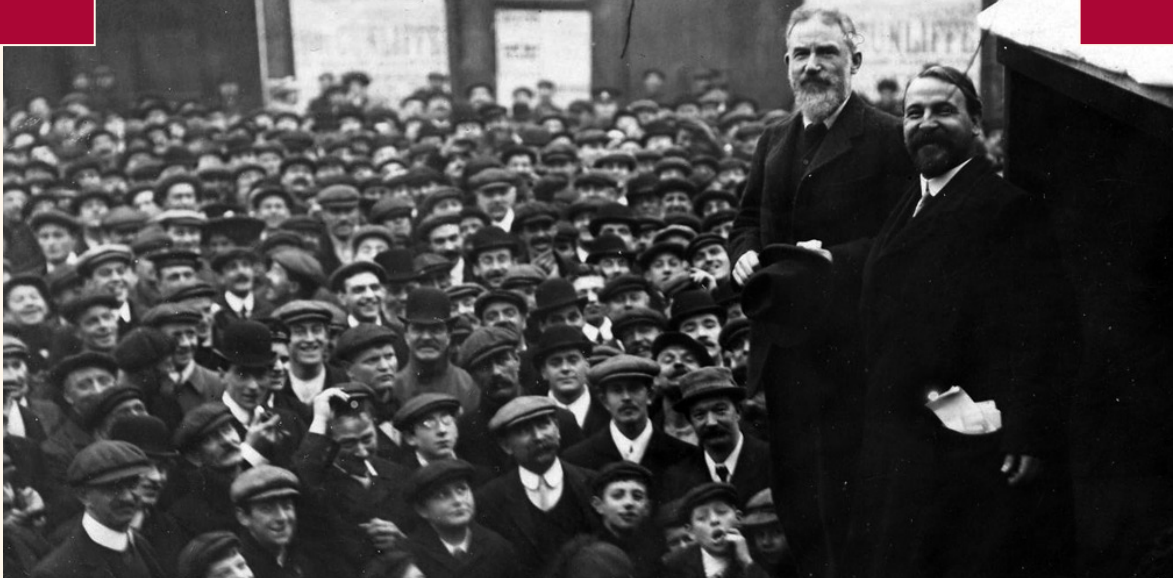


*Could a new wave of Conservative modernisation sink Labour?*

*The Fabian Review investigates emerging Tory trends, with Paul Goodman, Rob Halfon, Isabel Hardman, Kirsty McNeill, Tim Montgomerie, Duncan O'Leary and Laura Sandys*

**PLUS** *Mary Riddell speaks to Lord Ashcroft* **p14**

# FABIANS AT 130



For 130 years the Fabian Society has championed ideas and ideals that have shaped the left in Britain.

The society today is the bearer of that proud tradition.

But we are not a rich organisation. We don't have lots of big backers. We rely on the generosity of our members to survive and thrive.

In 2014 our goal is to raise £30,000 to support our vital work on tackling inequality in Britain.

## > CAN YOU HELP US? <

*Even a small regular donation will help*

Please complete the enclosed donation form alongside this magazine or visit:

[www.fabians.org.uk/members/fabians-130-appeal](http://www.fabians.org.uk/members/fabians-130-appeal)

### OUR APPEAL PATRONS



Sadiq Khan  
MP



Rachel Reeves  
MP



Margaret Hodge  
MP

# FABIAN REVIEW

Volume 126—No. 1

## Leader

*Andrew Harrop* 2 Let a thousand roses bloom

## Shortcuts

*Clare McNeil* 3 Unpicking the web  
*Barry Sheerman* 3 Crowd in  
*Isabel Hardman* 4 Seeing stars  
*Paul Goodman* 5 Mission unlikely  
*Tim Montgomerie* 6 Right direction  
*Richard Carr, Dominic Rustecki* 7 Closing the deal

## Cover story

*Duncan O'Leary* 8 Blue wave  
*Kirsty McNeill* 10 There's trouble abroad  
*Rob Halfon* 12 White van plan  
*Laura Sandys* 13 Re-making modernisation

## Interview

*Mary Riddell* 14 Lord of all he surveys

## Policy Pitch

*Natan Doron* 17 Follow the money

## Essay

*Anna Randle* 18 Citizen central

## Feature

*Rosie Clayton* 22 Nothing ventured, nothing gained

## Books

*Rob Tinker* 24 Crisis? What crisis?

26 Fabian Society section

**FABIAN  
SOCIETY**

### **FABIAN REVIEW**

Fabian Review is the quarterly journal of the Fabian Society. Like all publications of the Fabian Society, it represents not the collective view of the Society, but only the views of the individual writers. The responsibility of the Society is limited to approving its publications as worthy of consideration within the Labour movement.

Editor, Ed Wallis  
Editorial Assistant, Anya Pearson  
Printed by DG3, London E14 9TE  
Designed by Soapbox, www.soapbox.co.uk

ISSN 1356 1812  
review@fabian-society.org.uk

### **FABIAN SOCIETY**

61 Petty France  
London SW1H 9EU  
020 7227 4900 (main)  
020 7976 7153 (fax)  
info@fabian-society.org.uk  
www.fabians.org.uk

General Secretary,  
Andrew Harrop  
Deputy General Secretary,  
Marcus Roberts

Events and Partnerships  
Head of Events and  
Partnerships, Kate Godfrey

Events and Partnerships  
Assistant, Ben Sayah

Editorial  
Head of Editorial, Ed Wallis  
Editorial Assistant,  
Anya Pearson  
Media and Communications  
Manager, Richard Speight

Research  
Senior Researcher, Natan Doron  
Researcher, Rob Tinker

Membership  
Membership Officer,  
Giles Wright  
Local Societies Officer,  
Deborah Storate

Finance and Operations  
Head of Finance and  
Operations, Phil Mutero

Fabian Women's Network  
Ivana Bartoletti,  
fabianwomen@fabian-society.org.uk





© Kenn Goodall / bykenn.com

## Let a thousand roses bloom

We're all localists now, but the nature of Labour's decentralisation remains contested, writes *Andrew Harrop*

**F**ROM THE LEFT to the right of the Labour party, it would seem we're all localists now. Recently, a range of thinktanks wrote to the *Guardian* calling for Labour's manifesto to embrace sweeping devolution of power. If the 'big state' Fabians are signed up, Labour's argument on decentralisation is surely over?

Well, up to a point. England is the most centralised nation in the developed world, so the broad direction of travel is not in question. Devolution makes sense when the success of public services depends on shared endeavour between citizens and professionals; on responding to local conditions and individual circumstances; and on overcoming fragmentation and institutional short-termism.

But talking in generalities masks much that is unresolved. There are 'hard' and 'soft' versions of localism and big questions remain about the place of national government. Yes, we should have a presumption of decentralisation. But only if Labour first defines a clear strategic role for the centre and explains how and when that should be a check on localism.

The centre matters for three reasons. First, only national (and sometimes supranational) institutions can respond to the most serious long-term challenges: housing shortages, tax reform, climate change or financial stability. Sometimes the solutions will be local, but only national government can set the long-term ambition and create the frameworks within which others can act.

Second, England is a national political community. The secretaries of state for health and education do not have the public's consent to walk away from their responsibilities, even if they wanted to. That may gradually change, but for the foreseeable future, people will expect politicians to specify the minimum entitlements and outcomes all can expect.

Central government can be less controlling about how ends are achieved, leaving lots of space for grassroots innovation and local priorities. But when it comes to the 2015 manifesto Labour should feel entitled to set big national goals for local services, be that extending early years provision to bringing together health and social care.

Third, there should be a national approach to evidence and evaluation. We live in an age of growing transparency, but data sheds no light without context. A national approach to tracking achievement is essential for comparison and accountability, even though those tasks should be undertaken more often by local citizens or professional peers, not ministers and inspectorates.

It is not just the role of the centre that remains unresolved, however. The nature of Labour's decentralisation is contested too. Is it devolution to the city region, neighbourhood or individual institutions that matters? What should be the balance of power between citizens, professionals and local elected politicians?

In particular, it is far from clear that Labour views elected local councils as the key vehicle for localism. Labour councils are often singled out for praise, but it seems they won't be trusted with new powers over schools or health. And they are judged too small to take on responsibility for skills, transport and job centres.

Labour needs to be clear about the role of local councils, as well as national government. If it is not careful, new local power will end up lying with anonymous, unelected bodies creating new deficits of democracy, accountability and power. The pieces of the devolution jigsaw will only fit into place if stronger local government has the job of coordinating every local public service. ■

# Shortcuts



## UNPICKING THE WEB

A genuine rehabilitation revolution would reach beyond the criminal justice system—*Clare McNeil*

It seems the furore over Chris Grayling's decision to ban books being sent to prisoners has attracted more public attention than his plans to privatise 70 per cent of the probation service. As one civil servant at a recent roundtable observed privately, you may disagree with his 'rehabilitation revolution' but he has a convincing story and a clear plan for delivery, which is why the probation service itself has provided the only real opposition to the reforms so far.

The reforms to break up Probation Trusts and hand over rehabilitation of around 220,000 low to medium risk offenders to private firms and voluntary groups are moving more slowly than Grayling would like. But once they do take hold, the coalition will claim them as evidence of their strategy for dealing with the 'root causes of crime'. While the left may protest at the privatisation by stealth and the folly of payment-by-results for those with complex problems, it is doubtful many will listen. Instead the left needs a compelling story of its own.

To find this, it needs to reach back into its recent past. New Labour's Reducing Reoffending plan, produced by Tony Blair's social exclusion unit, shared similar ambitions to Grayling's rehabilitation revolution. It also provides an example of where it is likely to come unstuck.

Then, as now, one of the key challenges for reducing reoffending was the all-important period between a prisoner leaving the prison gate and receiving their first benefits payment. The unit identified a number of ways to bridge this so-called 'finance gap', but institutional barriers within Whitehall and the failure of one government department to accept a solution proposed by the other, meant their recommendations didn't get very far. As with much of the social

exclusion agenda, though much progress was made, inter-departmental wrangling often came before the joined-up local response that could have made a difference on the ground.

Grayling's model does nothing to overcome Whitehall's siloed ways of working and could make them worse. The large private companies competing for big contracts from the Ministry of Justice are not in the business of establishing links across the treatment of substance misuse, homelessness support and the mental health system. And yet for people caught up in an often senseless web of services, this integration is exactly what is needed for a breakthrough.

Before it was wound up by Gordon Brown, the social exclusion taskforce, as it ended up being known, began to unpick this web. It did this on the basis that around half of those in prison have also been in drug and alcohol treatment, homelessness services and the mental health system. Not just one of these, but all four. And yet still people are dealt with in one or perhaps two professional categories, rather than as individuals, with the result that there are at least eight national funding streams targeted on people in these systems, each with their own set of requirements and outcomes.

Since then, local authorities like Greater Manchester, South Tyneside and many others have continued innovate, but this has largely come from the local level and not from Whitehall.

One exception to this is the coalition's Troubled Families programme. Rather than acting as a 'bolt-on', as many national programmes have previously done, it is having a lasting impact on mainstream services. Building on New Labour's family intervention projects, its chief success has been to catalyse local integration of professionals and systems, as well as replacing atomised professionals with one-to-one support; such as in Oldham where the scheme has reduced reliance on a range of call-out or emergency services and is already achieving cost savings.

The Troubled Families approach – local, relational and with a disruptive influence on mainstream services – is also the one needed for a wider group lost in myriad systems for the most excluded, including many reoffenders. A genuine rehabilitation revolution would see Troubled Families style intensive

support extended to reach more people, coupled with far greater local control over the array of funding streams involved.

The weakness of Grayling's reforms lies not simply in their execution and intent, but in the fact that their ambition doesn't extend beyond the criminal justice system. Perhaps if the probation service had been run with greater local control and integration, it would not have been as easy to break it up and parcel it off with less fuss than a package sent to one of Her Majesty's prisons. ■

*Clare McNeil is a senior research fellow at IPPR*



## CROWD IN

People's love for their local environment could be harnessed by a new world of political activity made possible by emerging digital technologies—*Barry Sheerman*

The cost of living crisis has worrying consequences which reach beyond finding enough money to put food on the table, pay energy bills, and keep up with the mortgage or rent. More seemingly remote political concerns such as environmentalism suffer when families are struggling to keep up with everyday necessities. I have to confess that when I ask my constituents in Huddersfield what their political priorities are, very few mention looking after the environment, and most of those that do are students. In more pessimistic moments, I worry that environmentalism belongs with 'Making Poverty History' as a policy only for the boom times.

This apparent lack of traction with voters explains why the Conservatives have quietly and cravenly dropped their attempts to 'go green', which now look as hollow as their ill-fated 'big society' project. It also explains why Labour has been emphasising its >>

>> policy of freezing energy bills rather than its commitment to green policies.

However, I think all three political parties are missing an opportunity. As forthcoming Fabian Society research shows, people do care about the environment when they think locally and when they connect it to other important aspects of their lives, such as their friends and relatives, their house and home, the money in their wallet and their chances of getting a decent job or education.

My own experience as a social entrepreneur suggests that we are on the cusp of a whole new world of political activity made possible by social media and new digital technologies. Just last week I had 10 people at my constituency advice service urging me to oppose an aspect of the Lobbying Bill that touches on the charity sector. Before they entered my office they had never met, but were brought together by the online campaigning of 38 Degrees.

**Crowdfunding platforms give us the opportunity to identify projects and organise effectively at the local level, and to raise considerable amounts though investments from ordinary people**

At a time when membership of political parties is so low, people are forming fresh communities and groups online, which can be very effective activist organisations. Twitter, Facebook and all the rest make it easier for people to get their views across and take action. From effectively opposing provisions of the Lobbying Bill to toppling corrupt governments in places like Egypt and Tunisia, we have seen the incredible effect that these new forms of communication can have. There is a real opportunity for the environmental movement to take.

After radically altering communication, retail, journalism and much else besides, I believe the next sector to be overturned by the internet is finance. In a recent meeting with Ann-Marie Huby, the founder of Just Giving, she told me of the massive switch in charitable giving towards donations made through mobile phones. This makes it even easier to donate to important causes, including environmental causes.

I have become deeply involved in the crowdfunding movement, partly because crowdfunding is a brilliant and innovative way to support local and environmental projects. Crowdfunding platforms such as Crowdcube, Crowdpatch, Trillion Fund, and many more give us the opportunity to identify projects

and organise effectively at the local level, and to raise considerable amounts though investments from ordinary people. Eventually crowdfunding and peer-to-peer lending platforms should make it possible for every citizen to have a portfolio of investments, and because people are not only motivated by high financial returns and do care about their local environment, this could be an enormous boon to local green projects.

We are on the cusp of a new revolution in social and political communications and activity. And it gives every one of us in the environmental sector a great opportunity to support the causes we care about, even when political attention lies elsewhere. ■

*Barry Sheerman is MP for Huddersfield*



## SEEING STARS

Forget about Boris vs. George – the next Conservative leader could well be a bright young backbencher—

*Isabel Hardman*

The Tory party has months until the next election and yet it's just as excited about an election that has no set date: the one to decide the next party leader. The two big beasts, George Osborne and Boris Johnson, have been trying to outdo one another in terms of their links to backbenchers so that when the time comes, they're as ready as they can be to scoop up all the support they need to win.

Boris has agents working on his behalf in the Commons who grew rather alarmed by the chancellor's improving fortunes as the recovery gathered momentum. So they started inviting MPs for meetings with the mayor. This in turn alarmed Team George, who embarked on a rather public round of briefings designed to humiliate Boris. After the prime minister gave Osborne ally Michael Gove a 'right royal bollocking' following one sally in the FT, in which the education secretary criticised the number of Etonians around David Cameron, things have fallen silent – for now.

But this funny wrangling at the top – as well as setting a dreadful example to

backbenchers who already tend towards being a little overexcited – ignores the many rising stars lower down the party who could easily eclipse the big beasts. Never mind that it looks rather undignified to be appearing to install phone lines when there isn't a vacancy: these two men will, by the time the leadership contest does have a set date, have long Tory pasts. The party may decide that it wants someone with a bright Tory future. Other cabinet ministers, particularly Theresa May and Chris Grayling, also fancy their chances, but they too may discover that a junior minister or even a backbencher wows the rank and file in the end.

And there are plenty of bright, impressive junior ministers and backbenchers to choose from. There are also a number of very unlikely MPs who want to throw their hat into the ring and are being encouraged to do so by slightly more Machiavellian colleagues who see it as a method of flushing support away from rivals.

But the junior ministers and backbenchers with real chances are Liz Truss, Andrea Leadsom, Matt Hancock, Jesse Norman, Graham Brady, Nadhim Zahawi, Dominic Raab and the recently promoted Sajid Javid.

It's worth noting that many of these MPs are also leading members of the Free Enterprise Group, a right-leaning and large faction of Conservative MPs who press for free market reforms to reinvent Britain. They tend to get as many negative headlines as they do positive, as their prescriptions are often more about policy and less about politics (they recommended last November that the government put a 15 per cent tax on food and children's clothes), but the FEG Conservatives also tell us a lot about the future of the party. Many of them are new intake MPs who were quite surprised by how weak the intellectual debate in their party had become. They were worried that it was not prioritising a small state and a free market, and have fought for this ever since.

They do enjoy the chancellor's ear on many things, but not everything: FEG Tories do by and large worry about the effects of raising the minimum wage, for instance. Other campaign groups such as Renewal, led by Policy Exchange's former deputy director David Skelton, think higher wages and a message for working class, northern voters, is essential. Ministers are more amenable to the former than they are to the latter, with many privately mocking the idea of a 'message for the north'. But with so many Free Enterprise MPs destined for the top, this is the group to watch if you want to see what the future of the Conservative party looks like. ■

*Isabel Hardman is assistant editor of The Spectator*





## MISSION UNLIKELY

The odds are stacked against the Conservatives in 2015—

*Paul Goodman*

Like some card games, elections can be decided not by who plays best, but who has been dealt a winning hand. The party that holds it as the next election draws nearer is undoubtedly Labour. It has done very little to deserve this fortune. It didn't split the right by creating UKIP, which is siphoning off more votes in the marginals from the Conservatives than Labour. It didn't unify the left by forming the coalition, which has driven left-wing Liberal Democrat voters to Labour in protest. And it didn't landscape the electoral topography that sees Labour distribute its votes more efficiently than the Tories.

So how are the Conservatives seeking to make the best of the hand that they have? One way of finding the answer is to break the coming campaign down into the categories we often use on ConservativeHome – message, machine, manifesto.

First, message. Most election campaigns boil down to anger ('The country's crying out for change') versus fear ('Don't let the opposition ruin it'). The cards that Downing Street and CCHQ hold in this respect are among the strongest in their hand. Never mind whether you think George Osborne is or isn't responsible for the recovery, and the slowly rising living standards that go with it: growth is here, and Labour's living standards campaign would be better placed were these falling, not rising. And never mind whether or not you care for David Cameron: on most leadership-related polling, he outrates Ed Miliband.

The prime minister's clear intention is to fight a 1992-style election campaign, and hope that he can repeat John Major's success in turning round adverse polls. By contrast, Ed Miliband's is to emulate Margaret Thatcher's in 1979, and win a solid victory at the polls (since he's unlikely to repeat the Blair landslide of 1997, the only other time in the past 30 years or so that the opposition has won). The comparison with a Tory isn't meant to be offensive to Fabian readers;



© Syed Abdul Khaliq

after all, Miliband has made it himself. Like her, he is seeking to change the political weather.

Next, machine. Labour is noisy about its own, as anyone following Michael Dugher on Twitter will grasp. The Conservatives' motto, by contrast, is 'show, not tell': they didn't make a big deal, for example, of their recent move to a new, better-located, better-equipped Westminster base. They have their 40/40 strategy (in 40 seats they are defending, and in 40 attacking). The seats are not necessarily the most marginal on paper, but those where CCHQ thinks it is best placed. Campaign managers are being trained up at 'boot camp' in the West Midlands and assigned to each constituency.

**Labour lacks boots, too – but it can draw on the unions, whose under-the-radar work in some marginals gave the Conservatives such an unpleasant surprise last time round**

Like their Tory equivalents, some of Labour's strategists are hypnotised by the success of Obama's ground campaign in America: Labour has Arnie Graf, the Conservatives Jim Messina. There is reason to be sceptical of whether either party's Obama-isation has more substance than style. Tory MPs and candidates are not impressed by the efficacy of the Graf community organisers. But the Conservative machine has its own weaknesses, which are arguably even bigger. Campaign managers aren't always a substitute for professional agents. CCHQ's computer system, Merlin, is plagued by problems.

The resources provided by Michael Ashcroft and Michael Hintze and

sponsorship present in 2010 aren't there this time. Above all, the Tories lack 'boots on the ground': party membership has fallen, and the members' relationship with the leadership is tense. Labour lacks boots, too – but it can draw on the unions, whose under-the-radar work in some marginals gave the Conservatives such an unpleasant surprise last time round. Nonetheless, some Tory campaigning will be hard for Labour to spot, too, since it concentrates on direct mail and phone calls.

Manifesto? It's too early to say much, and in any event manifestos matter less than message or machine. Readers will be familiar with the big Tory pitch. Hard-working people (CCHQ is striving to eliminate the hyphen), with a stress on controlling immigration and, especially, welfare. Cameron has travelled a long way since the 'change, optimism and hope' of his early years. The heir to Blair has morphed into the voice of Lynton – Crosby, that is. Even so, the Conservative campaign chief's circle argues that the Tory are sending a big message about economic security in hard times, not a dog whistle.

Finally, and having written of cards, let me put my own on the table. Voters aren't yet thinking about the next election. As they do so and the Tory campaign gets going, the poll gap can reasonably be expected to close – especially since Labour's team at the top seems less well unified and organised than the Conservative equivalent. Yet the odds of an outright Tory win are very long. Essentially, Cameron and Grant Shapps are relying on an exceptional result in the marginals to deliver an outright victory. Is it possible? Yes. Is it likely? No. **F**

*Paul Goodman is the editor of ConservativeHome*



## RIGHT DIRECTION

Conservative party modernisation is not so much an incomplete project as one that's barely begun  
—*Tim Montgomerie*

David Cameron may hold on to power at the next general election – probably as leader of the largest party and possibly with a small majority of his own. But if he begins a second prime ministerial term it won't be because he has addressed the Conservative party's long-standing and deep-seated electoral weaknesses. It will be because in Ed Miliband and Ed Balls, Labour has its weakest leadership team since 1983. The Tories plan a deeply negative campaign. They hope to heal the fracture on the right of British politics by scaring UKIP voters with the prospect of Ed Miliband as prime minister. It might succeed. On many measures tested by YouGov, voters find Miliband an even less impressive politician than Gordon Brown.

David Cameron is not, of course, without qualities. Against many expectations he has forged and maintained the unity of Britain's first post-war coalition government. He and his chancellor, George Osborne, kept their nerve on deficit reduction and the UK's economy is now recovering quite quickly – albeit in an unbalanced way. The wisest Tory MPs look to the future, however, and to the stubbornness of their party's long-term weaknesses. Only one MP in Scotland. Minimal support among Britain's growing ethnic populations. And almost no representation at all in Britain's great northern cities. Cameronism hasn't addressed those problems and party modernisation is not so much an incomplete project as one that's barely begun.

Behind the speculation about whether Boris Johnson, George Osborne, Theresa May or perhaps a member of the 2010 Tory intake will succeed David Cameron are bigger questions about Tory strategy. A party that hasn't won a majority since 1992 – before a football had been kicked in the English premiership and before any of us had ever used or even heard of the internet – needs substantial reinvention.



© Boris Dreñec

That reinvention needs to address one substantial weakness above all others – the Tories are not seen to sufficiently care about the ordinary man and woman in the street. Voters like Tory instincts on tax, crime, Europe and immigration but they worry that Conservatives are insufficiently interested in the public services, too much a party of the rich and are likely to leave people on their own in tough times. In other words, the British electorate doesn't mind a right-wing party – they just want it to be a right-wing party with a heart.

**The British electorate doesn't mind a right-wing party – they just want it to be a right-wing party with a heart**

Cameron took the party in the wrong direction in the early years of his leadership. He stopped talking about immigration. He promised not to “bang on” about Europe. He avoided talk of tax cuts. The result was a huge gap in the political market and a huge opportunity for Nigel Farage – an opportunity he seized with all the fingers of the one hand he wasn't holding a pint with.

The danger, post-Cameron, is that the party lurches in another wrong direction. The libertarian right, for example, want the party to become a party of freedom – unshackling people and the economy from the state. This desire is understandable. The British state, our deficit and the tax burden are all too large. But in wanting and needing a smaller government it is important that Conservatives appreciate that people

want security as much as freedom. Many voters – perhaps most – aren't excited by stories of people being born on the wrong side of the tracks and scaling great heights. They'll never break through glass ceilings. Yes, they want and benefit from an economy that encourages aspiration but they also want an economy that doesn't leave people behind – that stands for social solidarity as well as social mobility. The next Tory majority will be built on an appreciation of this – an account of the security that government must continue to provide as well as a commitment to end the projects that are no longer affordable.

Communicating this vision of conservatism – a patriotic conservatism that loves the nation's people as much as its flag, institutions and history – will require some bold policy changes. A truly National Conservative party will impose higher taxes on large properties in order to fund social housing. It will restrict wealthier pensioners' access to benefits and fund early intervention in vulnerable children's lives. It will require private schools to provide more scholarships. It will allow northern England to keep the proceeds from fracking.

All of this one nation Conservatism will give the party the permission to accelerate the wider reforms necessary for our long-term prosperity. Airport expansion. Tax simplification. Deregulation. Greater competition in key public services. A party committed to the creation of wealth but also to sharing it. ■

*Tim Montgomerie is comment editor at The Times*





## CLOSING THE DEAL

Pro-devolution oppositions have a strange habit of changing their minds once elected, but a National Devolution Council would make sure decentralisation becomes a reality—*Richard Carr* and *Dominic Rustecki*

Opposition politicians from New Labour in the mid-1990s to David Cameron a decade later have promised to win power in order to give it away. As major interventions from Ed Miliband and his policy chief Jon Cruddas show, ‘one nation’ Labour is currently doing the same. But localists have been disappointed before and there remains a seemingly structural impasse, whereby apparently pro-devolution oppositions suddenly become centralising administrations upon receiving the keys to Downing Street.

To get around this and ensure decentralising intent becomes governing reality, the Labour opposition should create a National Devolution Council (NDC) to scrutinise the administration of the day’s devolutionary record. Not only would this complement both Miliband and Cruddas’s pro-localist proposals, but also the new ‘English deal’ Hilary Benn is looking to broker between Whitehall and town halls.

On a day to day basis, the NDC would act in a manner similar to the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), which provides future forecasts for key economic indicators over a five year period. The OBR was created in shadow form by the then Conservative opposition in December 2009 before being underpinned by statute after Cameron took office. It has an independent chair in Robert Chote, and draws its staff primarily from other civil service departments. The OBR answers parliamentary questions, attends Select Committees and enters the public debate outside of its formal remit. There is good reason for the NDC to follow this template.

Any NDC could be set up in similar form by Labour this autumn and immediately charged with considering the nature and effects of the proposed English deal. The NDC would provide annual reports on what powers should be devolved during the current and next parliamentary session, assess progress on current devolutionary legislation in passage, and outline where the devolution agenda should be looking over the next five years. It would have a small permanent staff, be based within the Cabinet Office, and would pro-actively liaise with local authorities both upper and lower tier to see what powers could be devolved, and why. As with other such bodies, much would depend on its appointing a dynamic figurehead. Yet Robert Chote, and both Ken Livingstone and Boris Johnson as mayors of London, have shown that soft power can often override any initial limitations in remit. At its core, and with such leadership in place, the NDC would be about ensuring localism stays on the political agenda.

**It is something of a paradox that increased localism will require a great shove from the centre**

As to command structures, we are not particularly dogmatic about the composition of any NDC board. Certainly the NDC would benefit from both local and central participation, and the involvement of civil service officials (to ensure the practical feasibility of proposals, as well as to help achieve buy-in and common ownership



© James Tickle

of its devolutionary recommendations). Perhaps any NDC board could therefore be comprised of one-third of each, but such details are open for debate. A background in local governance would likely be a useful mandatory precursor to any of these entry routes however.

It is something of a paradox that increased localism will require a great shove from the centre. But we must deal with the realities of our current system – for, as Blue Labour thinker Maurice Glasman notes, “we need both new institutions and a new mindset.” Ed Miliband has made some increasingly positive statements on issues such as the need for a local banking network, co-operation with local small businesses, and taking on those who are hoarding land to the detriment of house construction levels. But the devil will be in the detail.

The new English deal will give councils significant encouragement to come to Whitehall to ask for powers to be devolved. But the NDC could help translate such asks into concrete action. Whether it be through offering tweaks to legislation surrounding Business Improvement Districts, government devolving powers over a local stamp duty, or suggesting sources of capital to endow the regional banks of England, the NDC can be both an ideas factory and a prompt for great change across our country.

As Hilary Benn writes, an English deal that involves powers being passed downwards “can help rediscover the proud roots of the Labour party and rekindle the tradition where people came together locally and did things for themselves”. Establishing an NDC would be an important piece in this jigsaw. **F**

*Richard Carr is a lecturer in History at Anglia Ruskin University and author of the book One Nation Britain. He writes in a personal capacity*

*Dominic Rustecki is a government and media relations specialist working in the private sector. He writes in a personal capacity*

*England Expects: The new English deal and the politics of positivity is published as a series of three essays on the Fabian Review online, with a foreword by Maurice Glasman and an afterword by Hilary Benn.*

Read them at [www.fabians.org.uk/english-deal](http://www.fabians.org.uk/english-deal)

# Blue wave

David Cameron's modernising project was designed to share the proceeds of growth but operationalised as the administration of austerity. 'Little guy conservatism' offers a way for Tory modernisers to reconnect with the economic life of the country. But is the party willing to embrace it, asks *Duncan O'Leary*?



*Duncan O'Leary is research director of Demos think tank*

**A**MONG FRIENDS, GEORGE OSBORNE is known to rue his luck. As chancellor, Gordon Brown got to tour the country opening Sure Start centres; Osborne's lot is to close them. For Tory modernisers, it was never meant to be like this.

Just over eight years ago, David Cameron swept to the leadership of his party on a manifesto of change. After three successive election defeats, he argued, the Conservative party had to alter the way it looked, thought and acted. In practice, this meant a drive to recruit more women into politics, as well as more candidates from ethnic minority backgrounds. Meanwhile, on policy, there would be a shift towards a more liberal posture on a range of issues, from civil liberties to gay rights. The Tories would stop 'banging on' about immigration and Europe and do more to show they valued public services. Cameron's promise was of a Conservatism less fixated with a few core issues and more in tune with modern Britain.

The economy was not supposed to be the big issue. Cameron and Osborne promised to 'share the proceeds of growth' between public services and tax cuts, a phrase designed to reassure voters that public services would be remain well-funded. Little was said either about Britain's growth model, which was widely assumed to be working well. The financial crisis changed everything. A modernising project forged in the boom times had suddenly to deal with a world in which resources were scarce again.

Cameron and Osborne were quick to drop their pledge to match Labour's spending plans as part of a new focus on deficit reduction. Despite setbacks, they have made the political weather on this ever since. But what Cameron's modernising project had not prepared his party for was the new mood that emerged in the country during the downturn, which had less of the easygoing liberalism of the boom years. With jobs scarce and wages stagnating, public opinion shifted in a more communitarian direction.

On some issues this played to Tory strengths – or traditional strengths at least. Tough stances on immigration and welfare played well with a public concerned about others freeriding while they struggled to make ends meet. What the Tories did not have a response for was the way in which these more communitarian attitudes were applied to the economy too. Following the banking crisis, big business found itself in the spotlight. The public became less relaxed about the filthy rich – at least when people perceived that wealth was not properly earned.

The continuation of sky high bonuses in the City, even after the taxpayer bailout, was inevitably one focus of this. But a range of other industries have found themselves facing scrutiny, from payday lenders charging soaring interest rates to utility companies enjoying bumper profits as household bills rose. This growing sense that some companies were taking people for a ride was given extra energy both by civil society organisations such as London

Citizens and Movement for Change and by the Labour party in Westminster, which quickly refocused its message from 'cuts' to 'the cost of living'.

The response from ministers to this challenge has thus far been unconvincing. The government gives the impression of being browbeaten into policy measures, rather than making the running on cost of living issues. Moves to lift the low paid out of tax have been agreed upon, but largely thanks to pressure from the Liberal Democrat side of the coalition. Caps on interest rates for lenders and fees in the pension industry were both policies first opposed and then conceded by the government. On energy, green levies have been blamed for high prices, but ministers still find themselves on the back foot as Labour demands more competition and transparency.

Meanwhile, the government's main narrative on work is to contrast it with welfare, rather than to improve conditions for those in employment. Osborne's one foray into this area, with his 'shares for rights' scheme has been a political and a practical failure.

It is this vacuum that so-called 'little guy conservatism' – a term coined by *Times* columnist Tim Montgomerie – seeks to fill. Montgomerie describes the philosophy as a "bias towards the little guy", designed to protect the standard of living for those who work and hard, but do not necessarily rise high or earn well. Montgomerie points to Robert Halfon, the Harlow MP, as a leading proponent of this brand of conservatism. "Rob believes that the Tories can become a majority party only if they reimagining themselves as the workers' party — the true labour party".

Halfon has earned these credentials through a series of campaigns since the last election. Most eye-catchingly, Halfon has argued that the Conservative party should repair its relationship with trade unions. Unions, Halfon insists, are the ultimate 'big society' organisation, focused on creating change from the ground up, rather than through top-down legislation. He recommends that David Cameron should offer free membership to every trade unionist.

Halfon has not been alone in exploring new ways for Conservatives to champion workers' interests. Another big society enthusiast, Jesse Norman, founded the Conservative Co-operative Movement in 2007 before entering parliament, and remains a powerful advocate for the model. Phillip Blond's thinktank Republica continues to explore ideas around mutualism and employee-ownership, while Ryan Shorthouse of Bright Blue was calling for a rise in the minimum wage long before the chancellor came round to the idea.

The other side of 'little guy conservatism' is a desire to stand up for consumers where companies acquire too much market power. Dominic Raab, for example, wants to require the legal separation of the retail and supply arms of the water companies. The idea is to create more competition and to give consumers a clearer sense of what is driving up bills. Laura Sandys, the Conservative MP for South Thanet, has been running a campaign on proper food labelling so consumers know what they are eating. David Skelton of the Renewal pressure group argues that "standing up for

competition, the consumer and the small businessman against vested interests lies at the heart of the Tory tradition."

Each of these positions looks to close down the political space currently occupied by Ed Miliband's Labour party. Sceptics might argue that Labour will always win an argument framed in these terms, but the truth is that some of the methods favoured by Miliband look clumsy at best. No one is quite sure, for example, how a freeze on energy

prices could work in practice – and polling shows that the public are alive to this. Peter Kellner of YouGov points out that while two thirds of voters regard a freeze as a good idea, most people who like it in principle think it 'risky in practice given the volatility of energy prices in world markets'. Overall six in ten voters are sceptical either about the principle or the practicalities. The public may be

fed up with the 'big six', but they also know government has no magic wand. The attraction of 'little guy conservatism' is the desire to empower people to stand up for themselves in workplaces and consumer markets, rather than rely on government to do it for them.

The real question is how far ministers and manifesto authors are willing to heed this advice with much less reticence. Some on the right still see this as a betrayal of a basic belief in the free market, while many on the left console themselves that the Tories will never turn away from 'Thatcherite' economics. Such a view, though, is a caricature of her politics and a misreading of her appeal. Under Thatcher, the 'right to buy', the moves to widen share ownership and the relentless drive to promote competition and consumer choice were all designed to enhance the economic position of those people who were not already rich. The idea was to give the working class a proper stake in capitalism, not just to defeat socialism but to promote the virtues of hard work, thrift and self-help that Thatcher believed in.

This is the aspect of Thatcherism that the Conservative modernisers forgot too easily. It must be revived and updated if the party that once dominated British politics is to start winning majorities again. The current government cannot afford to sell off council houses at a discount, as the Thatcher government once did. Meanwhile, the Treasury remains focused on securing the best deal for the taxpayer when the nationalised banks are sold off. There will be no repeat of the 'Tell Sid' campaign of the Thatcher era. All this makes it harder for today's conservatives to find ways to champion the economic interests of today's working class.

It does not, however, make it any less important. Despite Cameron's initial call for change, the Conservative party has now not won a parliamentary majority for more than two decades. Cameron was right that the Conservative party needed to look, sound and act more like the rest of Britain. But this was never a substitute for an economic offering. "Popular capitalism" Mrs Thatcher argued, "is nothing less than a crusade to enfranchise the many in the economic life of the nation." If Tory modernisers are wondering where to turn next, little guy conservatism should serve as a reminder of what they are missing. ■

**The attraction of 'little guy conservatism' is the desire to empower people to stand up for themselves in workplaces and consumer markets, rather than rely on government to do it for them**



# There's trouble abroad

David Cameron is a foreign policy prisoner,  
trapped by his party, his ideology and his approach  
to government argues *Kirsty McNeill*



*Kirsty McNeill is a former  
Downing Street adviser and a  
consultant advising international  
organisations on strategy. She  
tweets @KirstyJMcNeill*

**D**AVID CAMERON HAS been prime minister during some of the most dramatic foreign policy developments of the last 20 years. From the Arab Spring to the crisis in Crimea, the coalition has been contending with global shifts every bit as important as the fall of the Berlin Wall or the global financial crash. But one year out from a general election, it is still impossible to discern anything that looks like a coherent Conservative analysis of how Britain might best project our power in an insecure and unequal world. The fault lies with a prime minister imprisoned by his party, his ideology and his approach to government – and the fallout has enormous implications for Ed Miliband's ability to change the world when he enters Number 10.

It didn't have to be this way. The early Tory modernisation efforts had plenty to cheer the progressive heart, from Cameron's embrace of international aid to his disavowal of "the fruit cakes, loonies and closet racists" poisoning Britain's debate about Europe and immigration. It looked like the Camerons really had understood the price their Conservative predecessors had paid for their 'nasty party' realism. Whether in their dubious relationship with

apartheid, their opposition to action in the Balkans, their apathy during the Rwandan genocide or their enthusiastic promotion of British arms sales to Iraq, Tory governments of old had consistently been found on the wrong side of the most important global questions of the day. The foreign policy of the previous Conservative government is perhaps best summarised by Douglas Hurd's mirror of Thatcher's domestic mantra: "there is no such thing as the international community". For a while, Cameron seemed intent on breaking with tradition.

In a sense, it hardly matters now whether Cameron's progressive internationalist conversion was ever more than skin deep: we know it barely survived the first few months of government. Despite flashes of genuine courage, such as his determination that Britain should help prevent atrocities in Libya, Cameron's retreat to the Conservative comfort zone has been depressingly predictable.

The first driver of that is both the extremity and the outspokenness of the 2010 Conservative intake. Professor Tim Bale describes a parliamentary party where "today's mainstream majority, inasmuch as it exists at all, is no longer that mainstream, at least relative to the electorate as a whole

... the right – free market, small state, low tax, tight borders, tougher sentences, eco- and euro-sceptical – is where the solid centre of the party now comfortably resides”.

While euroscepticism is a long-standing feature of the Conservative parliamentary party, the shrinking of the Tory payroll vote which has accompanied coalition government has made the new euro rebels even more ill-disciplined than their predecessors. Cameron’s lament in his first conference speech as Tory leader was that the party had lost touch with ordinary people’s concerns by “banging on about Europe”. Fast forward eight years and Cameron’s party is devoting more time to in-out referendum hokey cokey than the cost of living crisis. His isolation even from other centre-right leaders has reduced this country, in the words of *The Economist*, from “arguably the most powerful in the union”

at the turn of the millennium to one which “has not only relinquished its leading role, but barely features at all” in determining how Europe should respond to the economic and security crises unfolding around us.

But while Cameron’s party certainly limits his room for manoeuvre, it is not clear he regrets it all that much. On climate change, for instance, it was easy enough to hug a husky and pledge to be the “greenest government ever” in opposition, but in office Cameron has sided squarely with the vested interests of the energy sector. And while even the super-rich gathered at Davos listed inequality as their biggest concern, Cameron was busy fighting to keep inequality reduction targets out of the global framework which will replace the Millennium Development Goals. In the end, Cameron is a prisoner of his own ideology as well as his party’s.

The final driver of Cameron’s foreign policy failures is his own approach to government. When Ed Miliband decried this “incompetent, out-of-touch, U-turning, make-it-up-as-you-go-along, miserable shower of a government” he was speaking about their domestic track record, but the same aversion to detail and delivery afflicts Cameron on foreign affairs as elsewhere. It remains baffling, for example, that the Conservative whipping operation on the Syria vote was so lackadaisical and that he didn’t seem to have spent even 20 minutes gaming out what should happen in the event of his defeat.

His approach to key global moments, meanwhile, has simply been not turning up for work. When appointed by the UN secretary general to co-chair a high level panel on how the world should tackle poverty after 2015, he decided to stand up his fellow co-chairs – Africa’s first female president and the president of the world’s largest Muslim country – to give a speech about welfare instead. Even worse, he sent Justine Greening, a minister so uninterested in her role that Conservative commentator Iain Dale has labelled her “the Scarlet Pimpernel of the Tory party” and *The Spectator* has been reduced to begging “can’t she even pretend to like her job?”

Our slide towards irrelevance is becoming a national embarrassment. During the recent crisis in Ukraine Ben

Brogan has suggested that an absent Cameron means “Britain is increasingly a bystander on the world stage”, while Britain’s former ambassador to Moscow argues “the British seem to have given up doing foreign policy altogether”.

So what should an incoming Labour government do to help repair the damage done by five years of Cameron’s foreign policy imprisonment? Labour’s internationalists

face two different sets of dilemmas. The first concerns the painful policy trade-offs of which governing projects are made. Should we prioritise democratisation, stabilisation or liberalisation in the countries of the Arab Spring? How can the role of powerful dictatorships be minimised while our influence is maintained on questions of shared interest? Should our development spending be an instrument of foreign policy and,

if not, what other tools are we prepared to use to project British power?

The second set of dilemmas surrounds the politics of progressive internationalism. The recent ‘One Nation in the World’ Fabian pamphlet and the IPPR’s ‘Influencing Tomorrow’ do much to stake out the questions which Labour’s future foreign policy must address. But they also highlight – and do not resolve – three key internal splits in Labour’s foreign policy family. The first is between what can be termed ‘the paranoids and the Pollyannas’ – between those who think terrorism, extremism and Russian and Chinese belligerence combine to make a world in which left and liberal forces must form an aggressive counterweight, and those who believe that life on earth has never been so good and the role of progressives is to demonstrate rather than dictate the benefits of global trade, fair elections and social pluralism. The second is between those who want to start with our ideal scenario and then fight for the money for it and those, like Rachel Briggs, who believe it is time for an Austerity Internationalism, focussed on doing a small number of things really well and, in so doing, re-establishing the foreign policy faith of an Iraq-scarred British public. The third is between those who want to start with ideas (about, for example, humanitarianism) and those who want to start with institutions (and therefore focus instead on questions like UN reform and the rescue of multilateral bodies like the WTO).

Despite their differences, the people clustered on each side of these debates have a shared interest: they want to win the internal Labour battle for an internationalist not isolationist politics and they are coalescing fast into new and powerful networks. Over the next few months Labour’s leadership will face a more coordinated push to lay out our foreign policy principles and Ed Miliband will have to be clearer where he stands on each of these three big internal debates. David Cameron has been a foreign policy prisoner, but Ed Miliband could yet rescue Britain’s lost role as a global progressive powerhouse. First he must declare that there is such a thing as the international community, and he intends a Labour Britain to be right at its heart. ■

**Over the next few months  
Labour’s leadership will face  
a more coordinated push to  
lay out our foreign policy  
principles and Ed Miliband  
will have to be clearer  
where he stands**

# White van plan

Labour no longer represents working people, argues *Rob Halfon*. The Conservatives can fill the void if they shed their image as the party of the rich

Britain needs a new party to stand up for the interests of working people. In 1900, the Labour party was created to ensure a fair deal for workers. But modern Labour has moved away from workers with their credo of high benefits and high taxation. Who can step in and fill the gap?

Who is ready to stand up and say to working people on average earnings of £27,000, that the £1,200 a year you pay every year out of your taxes to pay the wages of benefit claimants (not even including the state pension) is high enough and should be reduced?

Who is really going to speak up for those families across Britain where one partner goes out to work at 6am in the morning in their vans, and comes back home at 7pm, when their other partner or spouse goes out to work at night? The kind of families that rarely have a holiday, struggle to keep their heads above water, but have a work ethic that is second to none.

Not the Liberal Democrats, who represent the chattering classes with their pro EU, pro green taxes agenda. Nor UKIP, who are angry that Britain has moved on from the 1950s without their permission, and seem to think that bashing immigrants, or getting



British Muslims to sign a special code of conduct (as proposed by a UKIP MEP), will get working people on side.

Might it be the Conservatives, the party of Disraeli, who made it the party's mission to 'elevate the condition of working people'? Or of Thatcher, who introduced 'right to buy'?

Let's replace the party tree emblem with a symbol of a ladder, representing the foundation of Conservative values

Possibly, but years of neglect have meant that Conservatives have been decimated in Scotland and weakened in the north of England. And for all sorts of historical and

political reasons, many millions of ethnic minority voters are still suspicious of the party.

Can Conservatives reclaim the mantle as the party for hard-working people?

So far Conservatives have cut taxes for 20 million lower earners, created 1.6 million jobs and 1.5 million apprenticeships, capped benefits, and frozen fuel duty.

But, to win back support, radical change is needed in the very nature of the Conservative party.

Let's stop bashing trade unions and make clearer the distinction between militant leaders and hard-working members. Let's offer Conservative-minded trade unionists free membership of the party. Let's value public sector workers: nurses, doctors, police and teachers, millions of whom put service above self. Let's support working people by strengthening the minimum wage and fighting for a living wage – achieved through further tax cuts for lower earners.

Let's also transform the Conservative party, so that never again will it be allowed to be called the party for the rich. First, rename it the Workers' Party, the party that speaks for the aspiration of hard-working people, and has the policies that count to help them.

Second, replace the party tree emblem with a symbol of a ladder – representing the moral mission that has always provided the foundation of Conservative values.

Third, let's give working people a real reason to join the new Conservative Workers' party: with a £1 fee only for joining, a real Workers' party could be more of a trade union than a political party. Not a trade union of the truculent variety, but one that offers real services to its members. So a discount fuel card offering cheaper petrol, and other retail offerings that help with the cost of living. Instead of asking members for money, the new Workers' party would be offering services to members.

None of this is rocket science. But there is a huge opportunity here. Back the workers, forgotten by Labour, and the Conservatives might even be back in power – and this time with a good majority. **F**

*Rob Halfon is Conservative MP for Harlow*





## Re-making modernisation

Moving beyond GDP and championing the re-manufacturing sector are the next steps for the Conservative party's green agenda, writes *Laura Sandys*

In July 2013, the prime minister said, "when it comes to clean energy, the UK has one of the clearest investment climates globally." You only need to look at the announcement Siemens made recently to invest £310m in two wind turbine factories in the north east, creating 1000 new jobs, to see that this is true. At almost all levels of government and industry, UK plc is more open for green business than ever before.

We want to see Britain become a world leader in green industry, just as London established itself as a global financial hub. While rhetoric can sometimes deliver mixed messages, it is equally the case that the arrangements for the green economy must be heard.

This is not about 'tree hugging' – the green economy is about hard edged, clear business decisions. When serious, world-leading companies such as Siemens, Rolls-Royce and Caterpillar are investing millions of pounds into the British economy because of our green credentials, we should be shouting that from the rooftops.

But what next for the green agenda?

In the most part, I am very proud of what this government has done on this issue. But we must always be looking forward at what we can do next. I am a great moderniser – I always want to be looking at what we have the potential to be doing in 10, 15 or 30 years from now.

With this in mind, four Conservative colleagues and I set up the Productivity and Efficiency Group to assess what we could be doing better to ensure that we squeeze every valuable drop out of the resources that we have to use – we wanted to make sure we were always 'Sweating Our Assets', as our report put it.

We were surprised to discover that key economic metrics, such as profitability and productivity are not measured as accurately as they could be. In fact neither the words 'profit' nor 'productivity' appear in the corporate plan of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. Far too much weight has been put on the blunt instrument of GDP. This raises serious questions about how we are to make our economy more pro-



ductive and efficient when we do not even measure these things. As Michael Bloomberg famously said: "If you can't measure it, you can't manage it".

We need to have a far more nuanced assessment of the UK's productivity – it is from this that we could really begin to understand some of the detail behind the top line GDP figures. As a nation, we would then be able to differentiate between 'good' and 'bad' growth. That way we could truly assess the impact of beneficial economic achievements – such as the value to the economy of saving a unit of energy.

**In public policy circles, regardless of the fact that some of Britain's best loved brands are already leading the way, once used resources are still largely regarded as waste**

Outside of Westminster 'wonder' of economic assessment and metrics, there are some really exciting companies being extremely innovative. The manufacturing sector is increasingly modernising itself into a re-manufacturing sector. They realise that the green, circular economy is not simply 'nice to have' but a necessity in the 21st century. If we want to compete in an increasingly aggressive world we need to make sure we are at the forefront of this innovative sector – just take Japan, its resource efficient sector alone was worth £128.1bn in 2011/12.

The Conservatives ought to be championing this market, showing our belief in backing innovation and entrepreneurship, by renaming the remanufacturing sec-



© 2008 Corey Holms

tor "ReMade in Britain" and giving it the full support of government. We have seen how popular and successful the "Britain is GREAT" campaign has been – I see no reason why this next extension of 'brand Britain' could not be equally as successful.

However, in public policy circles, regardless of the fact that some of Britain's best loved brands, such as Rolls-Royce and Caterpillar, are already leading the way, once-used resources are still largely regarded as waste. Waste is typically treated as having a negative value and recycling is being driven by an environmental agenda, rather than as a business opportunity that can drive higher profits for UK businesses. These views need to be modernised – and quickly.

Profitability, productivity and 'ReMade in Britain' – three interlinking areas that could revolutionise the British economy. It is in ideas such as these that I see the future of the green agenda. Britain was hugely successful in the past by ensuring that we always had a strong vision for the global economy and the role that we were going to play within it. Yet it is only by leading the 'green' way that we will be equally successful in the next century. **F**

*Laura Sandys is Conservative MP for South Thanet*



# Lord of all he surveys

Lord Ashcroft has made the successful transition from Tory treasurer to impartial pollster. In a rare audience, he shares his insights on everything from Blue Labour to Nigel Farage with *Mary Riddell*

© Paul Grover/REX



*Mary Riddell is a columnist for the Daily Telegraph*

ONCE BITTEN, TWICE shy. Lord Ashcroft is a veteran of bruising encounters with some in the media and the Labour party. That hostility, chronicled in his memoir, *Dirty Politics, Dirty Times*, burned out long ago. Since then, Michael Ashcroft – one-time Conservative party treasurer, deputy chairman and major party donor – has appeared to rise, phoenix-like, above the political fray.

In his latest incarnation as a master pollster and all-round éminence grise, he and his work are held in respect across the political spectrum. Either by virtue of the drubbing that his adversaries once tried to inflict on him, or because of the magisterial niche he now occupies, he is a wary interviewee.

More accurately, Lord Ashcroft is a non-interviewee. He does not, any longer, do interviews as such. On the very few occasions that he agrees to a dialogue, he stipulates a format of written questions and answers. None the less, he rings me (repeatedly, because I am in the car and keep getting cut off) to propose a third way. As well as replying in writing to Fabian questioning, he and I will talk informally.

This formula may be a rare if not unique concession, but it does not sound like Ashcroft Unplugged either. He is, however, franker on paper than I expect, assessing the

respective leaders' and parties' faults and failings with grim impartiality. *Smell the Coffee*, his post mortem pamphlet on the 2005 election, concluded that the Tory "brand problem" meant that its policies had no impact on voters "who mistrust our motivation and doubt our ability to deliver."

Almost ten years on, he believes that party has not remedied its central defect. "I think you would have to conclude that progress has been pretty limited, in that the feeling of Tories being out of touch with ordinary people is still there."

To say that modernisation has failed is, in his view, to miss the point. "Being a modern party isn't something you can just cross off the to-do list. Modernisation came to be symbolised by the husky trip, but that's not what it's all about. It means continuously being in touch with people and their priorities. Much easier said than done, of course."

Ed Miliband, he argues, has also failed to address his party's weaknesses. "[Labour's] brand was not as badly broken in 2010 as the Conservative brand had been in 1997. People still thought the party's heart was in the right place. But Labour did have big problems, and one thing that has surprised me about Ed Miliband is how little he has done to tackle them."

Besides suggesting that Miliband be tougher on welfare reform, he cites voters' worry about whether the party can be trusted with the economy. "I'm not sure opposing every single government cut is the best way to win back confidence on that score. We have to assume Ed knows all this, which must mean these positions are deliberate."

Ashcroft, who last year attended the Labour conference (a visit that might once have been deemed a perilous foray behind enemy lines), has not altered the view he expressed then that "[Ed] evidently decided quite early on that in order to win he did not need to reach out any further, or offer much more in the way of reassurance. With narrower poll leads since the Budget, I think that judgment is called into question."

Of the three main party leaders, Nick Clegg attracts what sounds the bleakest verdict. Asked how 'sticky' defections to Labour will prove from the Lib Dems, he says: "It looks quite sticky so far, and I think there is a limit to what Nick Clegg can do about it ... The problem is they always had an unsustainable coalition of voters."

As he points out, voters pleased they ended up in office would look askance at any rupture in the coalition, while "[the Lib Dems] would be unlikely to win back many of their former left-leaning supporters, who still blame them for putting the Tories in office. And they are not going to win back the 'none of the above' brigade because they no longer qualify as a protest party."

Skewed indeed. But though Ashcroft is always frank, he is never personal. Or so I think until we speak. He rings from a hotel room in New York, where he has settled down with a Starbucks latte. His secretary has passed on my message asking him to call early, he says, and he has heeded that request. Courteous as he is, and much more willing than I had imagined to talk about himself, he is careful – where political strategy is concerned – not to exceed the boundaries he has set. As a pollster, he sees himself as expert in surveying the battlefield but unwilling ever to fight the war, lest he breach the divide between the objective pollster and the subjective strategist. Nor does he deem it proper to tell the Tories what they should be doing.

That may come as news to successive Tory leaders. John Major had to pay back a £3 million loan at Ashcroft's request, Michael Howard received a stinging post-election verdict and Ashcroft has been labelled David Cameron's "most damaging critic". William Hague, his great friend and patron and the keynote speaker at Ashcroft's 60th birthday party (a black tie dinner for 700 guests at a Park Lane hotel) described him as "one of the worst people in the world to have as your enemy ... and the best person in the world to have as your friend."

Ashcroft might subscribe to that verdict, acknowledging that some who do not know him regard him very arrogant but pointing out that those who meet him end up feeling more kindly disposed. Of desire or of necessity, he has mellowed, well aware that a pollster's lot is to reach beyond the Tory cocoon and talk to people from across the political spectrum.

On the Labour front, his polling has suggested some optimism for 'Blue Labour' voices within the party, reflecting voters' concern with immigration and support for a more contributory welfare system. Does Blue Labour hold electoral possibilities for Ed Miliband?

"Most people will not have come across the phrase 'one nation' ... That is even more true for 'Blue Labour'. [But] if you read quite deeply about politics, you will find some interesting and even quite unexpected things being said by Jon Cruddas and people like Stella Creasy on extending consumer protection to public services, or Liz Kendall being on the side of users rather than public sector producers." So yes, it would seem that Ashcroft thinks there will be votes in the devolution of power championed by Cruddas and his ilk and increasingly promoted by the leader.

Unsurprisingly, Ashcroft thinks more should be done on welfare and immigration if voters are to be persuaded. "Do I think there are electoral possibilities for Labour in the 'blue' agenda? Potentially yes. Do I think Labour are embracing it? Not to the extent that most voters will have noticed."

At the time of our interview, one of the movement's most pivotal figures, Miliband's community organising chief, Arnie Graf, remains in Baltimore to the dismay of those who miss his influence on the ground. With those close to Miliband adamant that a full programme of work awaits him here, the reasons for his absence have not been explained.

Visa difficulties or marginalisation from forces within the party have both been cited as possible explanations. Ashcroft, who has previously appeared on a platform with Graf, is a big supporter of community organising in marginal seats, believing that it will play an important part in election results. While he has no inside track on the Graf story, experience has taught him that long-term projects get sacrificed to short-term expediency. Parties are always prone, in his view, to jettison the transformative as too difficult or too costly. David Cameron's dalliance with the 'big society' is perhaps a case in point.

Friends say he chafes that the Tories, who should have a 20-year-plan to attract young voters and ethnic minorities, are incubating no plans to enlist either group. Similarly, his warmth towards Cruddas and Graf's methods will certainly reflect what the voters are telling him. Indeed, a pollster's business, in his view, is purely to read the voter's mind. The verdicts he articulates are theirs, not his.

He fiercely rejects, for example, erroneous suggestions that he is against gay marriage – the issue that apparently provoked him to withdraw funding from Cameron. The merits of the case are immaterial. What matters is the effect at the ballot box and what drives the voter. Since gay marriage is perceived as a metropolitan crusade antipathetic to many grassroots Tories, Cameron – in Ashcroft's view – should have been more reflective.

This brand of applied morality begs the question of whether polling is useful armour for a famously private man. While Ashcroft and his numbers are hardly to be compared with Moses and the tablets of stone, he is also handing down someone else's verdicts. In a democracy where the voter is king, the power of the pollster is assured. But relaying the views of others also bestows a patina of anonymity that might, I guess, appeal to someone who has often seemed an outsider.

The child of a humble background (his parents met at the Blackpool Winter Gardens where his father was convalescing after being wounded on D-Day), he was a lonely schoolboy and a college failure who does not quite seem to fit the old Etonian template of the modern Tory party. Late >>



>> in life, he appears to have found his chosen metier. Polling, his passion and hobby, has so enthralled him that he would much rather spend his political budget on research than give it to the Conservative party. While he keeps open the possibility of future donations, he has other outlets for the colossal fortune he acquired as a self-made businessman.

A signatory to the Warren Buffett Giving Pledge, requiring billionaires to donate generously and bequeath the bulk of their wealth to charity, his most conspicuous material outlay has been the collection of Victoria Crosses – a homage to his war veteran father and to bravery in general – that he gave to the Imperial War Museum.

Although he is wary of labels such as “Compassionate” and “Little Guy” he has some sympathy for the ideas promoted by modernising Tories chasing the blue collar vote. “Some of the ideas that have emerged under that heading are definitely worth pursuing.” He warns, however, against populism and piecemeal policies.

“You can’t concentrate on the micro stuff at the expense of the macro: you have to be able to talk about both. It matters to people that big decisions are being made about managing the economy. I think this is actually the key to the election ... People are much more likely to think the economy is recovering than they are to feel any benefit themselves. The Conservatives need to ... explain how the ‘long term economic plan’ is connected to people’s personal fortunes.

“I think Labour have the reverse of this problem. I suspect the ‘cost of living crisis’ will start to have diminishing returns for Miliband. Complaining about how expensive things are isn’t really a programme for government. Promising to freeze energy prices is an unashamedly populist policy, but it leaves people wondering if it could work and whether Labour can be trusted with the bigger decisions.”

The holy grail of a 45 per cent election vote share, to which only Thatcher and Blair got close, becomes ever harder. As he says “there isn’t a sort of optimal manifesto that would suddenly bring people together in a spirit of national unity and unlock an unassailable majority. But it is obviously about building a broad coalition of voters.” Drumbeat messaging and the endless repetition of slogans such as ‘one nation’ and ‘cost of living crisis’ may repel voters who “increasingly react against mantras”.

That, however, is nothing compared with their antipathy to party leaders. Recent Ashcroft polling found that women see Ed Miliband as slimy and boring, Nick Clegg as spineless and wet and David Cameron as posh, out of touch and rich. Suffice to say that none has yet projected the image or found the language that voters understand. “It has to be clear, authentic, believable and ideally about people and the country and what you are going to do for them ... not about why your opponents are evil incarnate.”

Nigel Farage is perhaps the only party leader who could claim to meet those criteria. Ashcroft – who has met Miliband only once, in the nave at the Thatcher funeral – once spent a weekend on the Queen Elizabeth with Farage

and found him to be good company and humorous. He privately predicted that Farage would walk away with a debating victory against Nick Clegg and is said to consider UKIP a threat to all three main parties, not least the Lib Dems.

In a 20,000 sample Europe poll, Ashcroft found “more voters switching to UKIP from the Lib Dems than from Labour.” Though the Tories have most to lose, no leader can afford to be sanguine. Ashcroft thinks “UKIP are here to stay – or at least that is their intention. If they were really all about withdrawing from the EU, they would support the only election outcome that could give them the referendum they want, namely a Tory government. The better they do next year, the less likely that is to happen, which suggests their objective is to become a permanent fixture on the political scene.”

Ashcroft is also thinking beyond the next election. His forthcoming book on Cameron, scheduled for publication after May 2015, has raised questions about whether he is planning an obituary. His explanation is that he has published a pamphlet after successive Tory election defeats but has never before been in the position to chronicle the life of a serving prime minister. Questions about whether he will be investigating issues such as allegations of drug-taking in the past are always parried by the reply that this will be a full biography.

Quake as Cameron might, Ashcroft also has some words of reassurance. Asked about who might be the next leader of the Tories, he says: “the only polling I’ve done ... was on the Boris factor. And it was quite clear that for all his qualities, the idea that he would boost Tory fortunes at a stroke is somewhat misplaced. Cameron is still the party’s biggest asset.”

As for potential Miliband successors, “the internal workings of the party are a mystery to most of the people in it, let alone outsiders.” An outsider he may be, but polling has given Ashcroft unparalleled access to the voters’ minds.

Although he hates being asked to predict surprises, his watch list includes “seeing how Ukipers and Lib Dem defectors start to make their minds up in the marginals; the state of coalition relations as the election gets closer; whether the Tories overreact to the result of the European elections and how long the Ukip bounce takes to recede; the consumer confidence index; how people react to further spending cuts; and whether England win the World Cup.”

Into that melting pot, he would throw Cameron’s “advantage” over Miliband as a plausible PM and – in Labour’s favour – the “tribal” nature of the party’s voters. Beyond such truisms lie the point where every wise oracle keeps his options open. Lord Ashcroft does not deviate from that rule.

“Since the coalition was formed it has looked hard for the Tories to win, but if I were Ed Miliband, I would want to be a lot further ahead with a year to go. I said at the Labour conference that this could be the closest election in forty years, and nothing has happened to change my mind.” **F**

**“It has to be clear, authentic, believable and ideally about people and the country and what you are going to do for them ... not about why your opponents are evil incarnate”**

# Policy pitch

In a recent letter to the *Guardian*, the Fabian Society and other thinktanks urged Labour to pledge a big political offer to capture imaginations as opposed to playing it safe until May 2015. Some criticised the letter as merely containing vague exhortations to boldness, so let's get specific about what a "radical, transformative, decentralising programme" actually means in practice. Labour should reform the role of the Treasury.

The Treasury is the cul-de-sac in which many initiatives in British politics are quietly strangled. Decarbonisation? The Treasury has slowed it down by preventing the green investment bank from having real borrowing powers. Housebuilding? The Treasury has held back local authority power by limiting its ability to build social housing through tight controls on borrowing power. Transport? The Treasury has the final say on what gets built and where.

Financial restraint and getting value for money for the taxpayer are key duty of government. But the problem with the Treasury is that it both allocates the money and oversees how it is spent. It has the ability to kill programmes at will by shutting off the money, often with little or no explanation. Critics have described it as overly byzantine, opaque and institutionally conservative. The green investment bank is a case in point; before it can borrow government debt must be falling. Investment in the long-term future of the British economy has essentially been put on ice by a single, over-mighty department.

So what can be done? There are different ways to curb the influence of the Treasury, which forthcoming Fabian Society work will explore.

One method is to move the money. Currently 60 per cent of local authority funding comes from central grants administered by the Treasury. This is higher than in many comparable countries, with the average in Europe being around 50 per cent. Allowing local authorities to directly manage more of their budgets would lessen the power that lies in Whitehall. This could be achieved either by giving more money straight to local authorities or by allowing more revenue to

## Follow the money

If Labour wants to make a truly transformative change, it should start a programme to decentralise spending decisions, writes *Natan Doron*



be raised by local authorities themselves through taxation.

Another option is to literally split it into two departments. The UK is a rarity in having a department that is responsible for both finance and economics. Australia, Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands to different extents all have two departments to do what the Treasury does. Crudely, one department manages finance by looking at tax and expenditure while the other manages economic affairs such as industrial strategy or investment in research and development. This was attempted by the Labour government in 1964 but the new Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) only lasted five years. Never clear in its goals, it never succeeded in breaking the dominance of the Treasury – a lesson that any potential Treasury reformers would do well to heed.

There are welcome signs that the Labour party is beginning to grapple with this problem. Both Ed Miliband and Jon Cruddas have said that Labour intends to win power in order to give it away. But scepticism still remains about how much of this decentralising agenda can be achieved in practice. A recent Institute for Government report exploring why achieving political decentralisation is so hard found that "the main problem is that departments responsible for leading decentralisation efforts must resort to going 'cap in



© HM Treasury

hand' around Whitehall. DCLG, who often lead these efforts, has little institutional leverage over other departments – not least the Treasury – which must be key players in any meaningful decentralisation process." Indeed, Jeremy Cliffe has written in *The Economist* of the need for a 'Department of Milibandism' as "British political history is littered with examples of leaders who talked vaguely yet grandly in opposition—be it of the white heat of technology, stakeholder capitalism or the Big Society—but never quite lived up to the language in government." This is necessary because "the Treasury's institutional instincts, tuned to the act of opening and closing government spending sluices, leave little room for overhauling economic institutions, business policies or regulation".

So far, Ed Balls' messaging has focused on displays of public spending discipline: a zero-based budget review and a commitment to run a current budget surplus. Both are within the remit of a new finance department, which leaves room for Labour to explore the options of either a separate Department of Economic Affairs, increased revenue raising powers for local authorities, or both. One thing is clear: with an election a little over a year away, Labour will struggle to let go of power without taking on the power hoarders at the Treasury. ■

*Natan Doron is senior researcher at the Fabian Society*



© Kenn Goodall / bykenn.com

# Citizen central

Labour seems increasingly committed to the idea of decentralising power in theory, but what will that look like in practice? *Anna Randle* argues there is much to learn from the example of co-operative councils, which are attempting to fundamentally shift the concept of what public services are and put citizens at the centre of all that they do



*Anna Randle helped set up the Cooperative Councils Innovation Network and works on cooperative development and implementation at London Borough of Lambeth*



**F**EBRUARY WAS THE month when senior Labour figures began to set out a new vision for public services. Speeches by Ed Miliband and Jon Cruddas sketched their proposals for a radical redistribution of power from central government to individuals, communities and localities, putting ‘people power’ at the heart of ‘one nation’ politics.

This represents a significant shift from the statism of the New Labour years, and deliberately so. Ed Miliband and Jon Cruddas are not alone in recognising that the command and control tendencies of the past often did not bring about the changes in people’s lives which they were intended to. They also distorted behaviour at the local level and afforded ministers a false sense of security in their ability to drive change down a public service delivery chain. Miliband and Cruddas have made an explicit break with the post-Beveridge social contract, moving away from the belief that the central state is the best mechanism for solving people’s problems and beginning to chart a new direction for the centre-left based on a sharing of power with citizens and service users.

Despite historical references to the communitarian side of Labour thinking in these speeches however, this change of direction has not been dreamt up over a weekend spent with the pamphlets of Michael Young and a few volumes of Richard Sennett. Building on themes central to the Blue Labour movement, increasingly loud calls for a reappraisal of New Labour’s record in power and new clarity of direction have been heard from Labour figures over the past year. Stella Creasy writing in the *New Statesman* last autumn called for “people-led politics” focused on “help[ing] citizens become more resilient and more open to opportunities” and “putting members of the public in charge of their own destiny so we can prevent problems rather than just mitigating them”. Patrick Diamond and Michael Kenny, also writing in the *New Statesman*, called for Ed Miliband to “redefine British social democracy as more participative, more socially liberal, and more community-focused”. The IPPR recently set out its vision for the ‘relational state’, designed to respond to complex and interconnected social issues by devolving power, connecting services and deepening relationships. And, for the Fabians, Jon Wilson’s pamphlet *Letting Go* said Labour needed to learn to trust the people, as “real, practical democracy is the only answer to people’s massive sense of disempowerment”.

Beyond the theory, however, as both Miliband and Cruddas pointed out, a small number of Labour ‘co-operative councils’, such as Lambeth, Oldham, Sunderland and Newcastle, are already prototyping these ideas. They are building new ways of governing with citizens at the centre of all that they do, and forging a new, more equal and reciprocal account of the role of the state and its relationships with the people it was historically designed to serve. The work of articulating new principles for public services has begun at the same time as they are being put into practice to drive real change.

### **New principles for public services**

The five principles set out by Jon Cruddas in his recent speech are also those guiding Labour’s ongoing policy review: transformation; prevention; devolution; collaboration and co-operation; and citizenship and contribution.

These principles are core to the endeavors of co-operative councils. Co-operative councils stress the importance of ‘social partnership’ between citizens, communities and councils, based on a sense of shared responsibility for wellbeing and mutual benefit. Co-operative councils are embracing ‘co-production’ as a default model for public services, developing systems that enable to citizens to be equal partners in designing and commissioning services and determining the use of public resources. They recognise the value of citizens’ contribution to, and role in, solving problems and building stronger communities. They therefore increasingly embrace the role of the local authority as a builder of social connections, networks and platforms for action, rather than the municipal provider of services to a relatively passive population.

### **Why co-operative, and why now?**

Co-operative councils’ analysis of the need for a change in the way they work is much the same as the analysis offered by both Miliband and Cruddas in their recent speeches. Key to this is that unprecedented increases in demand for public services, coupled with cuts in funding, mean that something has to change if councils are not going to retreat into statutory service delivery alone.

However, there is also a recognition that prolonged investment during the New Labour years did not enable public agencies and services to resolve some of the most pressing social issues of our day: for example, pockets of entrenched poverty and worklessness; so-called ‘troubled families’, who receive multiple state interventions to little effect; the impact of lifestyle diseases including obesity.

Co-operative councils agree that traditional models of top-down governance and service delivery at the local level no longer work. United in their search for a new approach, they have looked to the founding traditions of the co-operative movement – collective action and co-operation, empowerment and enterprise – as a foundation for solutions to tackle the challenges of today, learning and refining what this means in practice as they go.

These are not simple concepts to articulate, nor to bring to life in the ways these councils work. The scale of this challenge is such that co-operative councils have benefited from taking some of these steps together, with the 19 co-operative councils from across the country coming together to form the Co-operative Councils Innovation Network (CCIN). As well as sharing ideas and expertise, in its first nine months it would be fair to say that this collaboration has also revealed some of the complexities inherent in this agenda.

One important learning point is that not all co-operative councils are at the same stage of thinking and practice about what it means to be ‘co-operative’. This is not surprising, given that the word has a specific meaning in terms of organisational form, and strong associations with the Co-operative party and the Co-operative group. There is much common ground with both, but also points of difference.

As co-operative councils have evolved their thinking and practice, the question of what makes them ‘co-operative’ has become more about adherence to the shared set of principles and values outlined above, than specific organisational models such as mutuals and co-operatives – more about behaviours than form. It has become clear that >>

>> 'being co-operative' for these places is more a question of 'co-operative' as a verb than a noun – a way of working that is principally about creating an equal relationship with citizens and service users, rather than creating new models of service delivery based on mutual and co-operative models (though these so also have their place).

Some co-operative councils are at a relatively early stage of implementation, thinking about what working co-operatively would look like in different service areas, setting up projects to test ideas and looking around at what others are doing. Most, however, have established significant co-operative projects that are changing the way that key services are being run. These include:

- York's library service, which is transferring to a Community Benefit Society that will work on an independent basis. It will be jointly owned by staff and residents who will be able to shape and deliver a library service that meets the needs of the community, as well as explore new income streams which will be reinvested in the service



© 2010 Remi Longva

- Lambeth's development of a new co-operative model for the running of its parks and open spaces, working with 'friends' groups and other community groups to explore how they can be supported to take over the running of the parks where they wish to. The groups are interested in exploring how they can provide key services such as grounds maintenance in ways which support local outcomes such as employment and tackling reoffending, working in a different way with smaller local suppliers and utilising skills in the community
- Oldham's establishment of two trading/mutual 'hybrid' arms for adult social care, fully owned by the council, with staff and service user engagement at the heart of the model. The new organisations were established in response to budget pressures, but as an alternative to fully outsourcing services to the private sector. Able to work in more flexible and innovative ways than traditional council departments, the new organisations are building new business from self-funders and people with personal budgets, who are choosing to opt out of the private sector, despite the lower prices they can offer. Any profits from the new companies will be reinvested in local services
- Plymouth's work to support collaboration across the education sector in the city, including working with the growing numbers of schools in the city that wish to follow the example of Lipson Co-operative Academy, which is showcased nationally as an example of how co-operative principles applied to education can achieve dramatic improvement. The council is also supporting the wider development of co-operation and collaboration within education among a range of organisations in the city, for example, helping schools to benefit from the integration of school to school support services and benefit from economies of scale when commissioning support services.

However, while such service-based case studies are useful in showing that co-operative principles do lead to real changes in the way services are designed and run, they also point to the second lesson that has emerged from the work of the CCIN so far: the difficulty of expressing the more fundamental system change underpinning the case studies themselves. A description of isolated examples such as these almost inevitably fails to communicate the significance of the shift in thinking of which such projects are the result.

More interesting therefore – especially for Labour thinkers who are searching for a new account of public services for beyond 2015 – are the smaller number of co-operative councils whose approach has matured beyond early thinking and project or service-based approaches, and are now deeply into implementation and the profound system change that this can imply.

### From services to system change

Co-operative councils – perhaps alongside a very small number of other councils such as those that are pioneering community budgets – are attempting to fundamentally shift the concept of what public services are and how they should work, with citizens at the centre of all that they do. Redesigning services is a crucial part of this, but in fact it requires everything that the council does to change.

People have occasionally observed that from the outside ‘not much is happening’ in some co-operative council areas – and this may be a fair criticism from their perspective. However, system change means what it says: changing every single component part of the way an organisation works. This means rethinking the very way that the public service ‘system’ is considered, so that it incorporates residents and partners – in ways which may be rather invisible from the outside until all the pieces of the jigsaw are in place that enable the whole system to work differently.

To give a sense of what system change implies, let’s look at Lambeth, the first co-operative council. In the borough, the implementation of co-operative thinking has meant putting ‘co-operative commissioning’ – driven by outcomes and actively involving citizens – at the heart of the council’s operating model. This in turn has required a total restructuring of the council’s departments, with the dismantling of traditional silos and the creation of ‘clusters’ around outcomes, in an attempt to reflect the ways that issues are experienced by people in the community and the way outcomes relate to each other. It has meant rewriting the council’s constitution, changing the role of cabinet members to formally make them the commissioners of outcomes, with attention now turning to local community-based commissioning and the role of ward members.

Apart from the high profile projects in areas such as libraries, youth services and parks, none of this is especially visible to the outside world until it starts working, but the heavy lifting involved in making these sorts of changes in a large bureaucracy – turning the way the organisation works on its head, so people are at the centre of the system rather than at the end of a ‘delivery chain’ – cannot be underplayed.

Beyond the flagship service-based projects therefore, there are examples from co-operative councils of projects designed to understand how this more equal relationship with citizens can be realised across the whole system. Lambeth’s ‘OpenWorks’ project in West Norwood is exploring the ways in which the council can provide platforms for collaboration and innovation among local people, supporting them to establish their own projects and understand how these can contribute to positive changes in the community. Oldham’s work on the Troubled Families programme is seeking to redesign the way public services work with families, starting from their perspective and understanding the impact of factors normally outside the ‘service lens’ – social networks and norms – on their lives. Sunderland’s Community Leadership programme is developing area-based commissioning of services and outcomes. It seeks to involve ward councillors and local people in decisions that help to ensure that services are responsive to local needs, but also that alternatives to traditional service delivery are created – for example, supporting community activity and ‘local self-help’ as ways of meeting needs which are normally considered through formal adult social care services.

Places like these are at the forefront of the creation of a new state. Whether we call it relational or enabling, it is a state that does not believe it has all the answers, and knows that people can be actively supported to help themselves and each other. It understands that value lies in people and society, and that the state can act to support and mobilise this human and social capital for community benefit. It recognises that good outcomes are as much about people having influence over their lives and living in a strong, supportive community, as ‘delivering’ the hard outputs which tend to dominate our political debates – hospital waiting times, changes to the school syllabus, residential care places. Yes, all of these things matter. But the outcomes they are designed to achieve – healthier communities; educated, work-ready young people; safe and secure older people – require so much more than simple delivery.

It will take huge amounts of political bravery for Labour nationally to say some of the harder things that come with a more equal share of responsibility between citizens and the state. It requires a shift from talking about those specific services or outputs we all become so attached to, which so often act as proxies for the things that really matter, towards a focus on the changes Labour wants to see in our society and a vision of the role of government – at all levels – and of citizens too, in achieving them.

It also requires enormous restraint both in political campaigning in the run up to a general election, and ultimately in behaviour in government. No longer will politicians be able to claim they can solve all of our problems. No longer will they be able to try and pull levers in Whitehall to fix issues in local communities.

This is complex political territory for the left, tarnished in recent memory by the failed Tory narrative of the ‘big society’ and bringing with it the inevitable accusations that this is about a handover of risk and a withdrawal of responsibility on the part of the state. Focusing on citizenship is crucial, articulating the positive contribution we can all make to building a stronger society and emphasising the importance of building a partnership between citizens and state which reflects the value that all can bring. Again, co-operative councils are already navigating some of this complex territory with local residents.

Ultimately, there are big implications for the shape and role of central government too – historically organised around silos with responsibility for delivery – which have not yet been fully thought through.

Ed Miliband was correct when he said that this is about “a culture for the way public services ought to work” and a “sense of purpose [that] acts as a guide” for public servants – central government setting expectations for behaviour and ways of working on behalf of the state, rather than specific outputs. He has begun to articulate a new vision for public services. Whether, given the opportunity, he is brave enough to put it into action remains to be seen. If he does, he has the example of pioneering Labour-run co-operative councils from up and down the country to follow. **F**

**Yes, all of these things matter. But the outcomes they are designed to achieve – healthier communities; educated, work-ready young people; safe and secure older people – require so much more than simple delivery**



# Nothing ventured, nothing gained

The turmoil of the coalition's education reforms provides an opportunity to rethink how things are done  
argues *Rosie Clayton*



*Rosie Clayton works for the Studio Schools Trust and tweets @SST\_Rosie*

**T**HE FINANCIAL CRASH of 2008 has sharply exposed the increasing misalignment of our education system with its fundamental purpose – to meet the future needs of the labour market, and to effectively equip all young citizens with the knowledge and skills to succeed in life.

For many young people, the belief that hard work will translate into a good job for life has proved a false promise, with youth unemployment and underemployment at record levels. Yet despite this, as Andrew Adonis has noted, employers are consistently complaining that they cannot recruit enough young people with the right skills.

The nature of work is also rapidly changing. Young people leaving school today are likely to have numerous different jobs throughout their lifetime, many that haven't been invented yet, and some which they may well create themselves. A report by the Prince's Trust last year, *The Start Up Generation*, showed that 30 per cent of young people believe they will be self-employed in the future, while one in four expect to be their own boss within the next five years. Entrepreneurialism, resilience, creativity, and self-reliance will be increasingly important qualities.

Young people also have a keen interest in community and global challenges, and a strong sense of social purpose. Adam Lent from the RSA has talked about the rise of the 'venturists': "Young people determined to bring about change here and now. Venturists don't wait for or ask others to deliver. They get on with delivery themselves. Their primary driving force is the mission not the money."

Within this context there is a strong imperative to move beyond the inherent short-termism of political policy cycles, to look at how our schools can be more than just 'exam factories' and live up to young people's expectations, ambitions and aspirations. How can schools harness the

passion of all young people and equip them with the skills and knowledge that they will need to navigate their constantly evolving world?

Over the past four years this government has embarked upon a series of structural reforms of the education system, accelerating the pace of change started under Labour. Despite the ongoing turmoil, many of the changes have provided opportunities to rethink how things are done. Four big priorities are emerging for government and policymakers in the new education landscape.

## **1. Life beyond the school gate**

Experiences beyond the classroom, particularly of the world of work, are of vital importance to young people to help them make choices in life and develop skills for the future.

A recent report by UKCES highlights that "29 per cent of employers say that experience is critical when recruiting young people and a further 45 per cent say it is significant. Lack of experience is also the number one reason that employers turn young job applicants away."

We know that this is a huge equality issue, as parental networks and contacts often play a big role in sourcing work experience opportunities and sometimes first jobs for young people. Since the government abolished compulsory Year 10 work experience, few schools now see this as part of their core business, and last year Ofsted reported on the dire state of careers advice in secondary schools.

This needs urgent attention. One solution may lie in redefining the concept of the classroom. Studio Schools, for example, are based on the concept of the renaissance studio, where working and learning are integrated. Through multi-disciplinary project-based learning, core subjects are linked to real world challenges to aid engagement and understanding. Employers (from multinationals to SMEs)

offer work experience and work placements, community organisations commission projects, and industry experts mentor students and give guest lectures and masterclasses, enabling young people to have a diverse range of learning experiences.

This kind of approach, which ingrains external expertise and a philosophy of partnership, is not only helping to bridge the gap between the classroom and the workplace, but also allows young people to develop a wide range of personal and life skills, with an emphasis much more on the whole person and future life aspirations.

## 2. Soft skills and performance measures

Related to this there are growing calls for a more systematic focus on the development of soft skills and wider employability and enterprise skills in schools. The CBI makes a strong case for this citing the Singaporean education system as an example:

“The person who is schooled in the Singapore education system embodies the desired outcomes of education. He has a good sense of self-awareness, a sound moral compass, and the necessary skills and knowledge to take on challenges of the future. He is responsible to his family, community and nation. He appreciates the beauty of the world around him, possesses a healthy mind and body, and has a zest for life.”

This is a hot topic. The All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Mobility recently published their Character and Resilience Manifesto, arguing that the development of soft skills should be embedded in school curriculums and teacher training.

Schools are highly data and target driven, and if this is ever going to become more than a woolly aspiration then we will need look at the measures used to assess school effectiveness and performance. The current accountability system focuses on a narrow range of exam achievement, and the proposed new secondary performance measures (looking at progress across five different measures including student destination post school) has the potential to allow schools to move beyond the crude ‘percentage of students who gain 5A\*-C grades at GCSE’ measure currently most prized.

The rise in big data could also provide an opportunity here, with the potential to develop new tools for measuring and quantifying the holistic value and impact of a school, for example around changing aspirations and wellbeing. Like Singapore, we need a much wider societal (and political) definition of what ‘success’ in school looks like.

## 3. New expertise and local solutions

Recent structural reforms have transformed the nature of school governance. Governors are now expected to bring a range of high-level professional skills to the table in monitoring school performance and holding leadership to account. This has the potential to bring a new dynamism into the system, and one of the more interesting developments has been the emergence of local school federations – often partnerships between primary, secondary and FE/HE providers, as well as external organisations such as LEPs – to share knowledge and expertise, and help develop

local solutions to education challenges. This model allows a diversity of skills and expertise to enhance the whole, as well as collaboration and innovation between providers and across sectors which would previously have worked independently.

Good governance, however, relies on the ability of schools to source and draw in the necessary expertise. It also assumes that there is a steady supply of individuals in communities across the country who have the time and desire to get involved – often more of a challenge in rural and coastal areas than cities. As Estelle Morris has noted, “The shift in power over the last 30 years from local authorities to schools means the largest volunteer force in the country has had to transform itself from ‘friends of the school’ to a body capable of running a multimillion-pound key public service.”

There is clearly a huge scaling up challenge, and an imperative to share good practice and expertise, for example around training, and think more creatively about how this is done.

## 4. Technology and social media

For the digitally native generation, the internet is transforming all aspects of daily life, offering unlimited access to information and knowledge. New mobile technologies are challenging traditional notions of how and where we learn, and flexing the structure and boundaries of ‘work’. The advent of MOOCs and concepts such as the flipped classroom have the potential to allow young people to take more responsibility and ownership over their learning and skills development.

For practitioners technology enables the development of new online resource platforms. And social networks allow practitioners to connect and collaborate in new ways, and to feed into national debates from the frontline. The Headteachers’ Roundtable, originally formed on Twitter, and other forums such as #SLTchat and #PBLchat, allow educators to get together, regardless of location, to discuss experiences and put forward ideas.

So as the new education landscape takes shape, these four areas present opportunities as well as challenges for educators and policymakers. Academy freedoms have in theory given schools the autonomy to innovate, to adapt their curriculum, and to collaborate in new ways to better meet the needs of their students and community. However, the question remains as to how schools can be incentivised and supported through the accountability system to make this the norm rather the exception.

In March, the Labour party published the final report of its Skills Taskforce, calling for a new national baccalaureate for school leavers comprising of four components, including a personal skills development programme (with an element of workplace learning), and an extended project. Though currently lacking detail, this could prove an interesting development, particularly in cementing the importance of skills as well as knowledge, and moving towards a more holistic framework of school success metrics.

And whilst all this is going on, practitioners and educators across the country are getting on with the job – grabbing the digital tools, organising themselves, and embracing the venturist mindset – helping to shape the landscape rather than waiting for someone else to do it. **F**

# Books

## Crisis? What crisis?

Two books suggest the left's inability to capitalise on the crisis of neoliberalism may stem from the fact that we are still struggling to understand its particular character, writes *Rob Tinker*



*Rob Tinker is a researcher at the Fabian Society*

Since 2010, George Osborne, has overseen plans which, if accomplished, will reduce day to day government spending to its lowest share of national income since 1948. The government in which he serves has also accelerated a process of marketisation in key public services, where the state is no longer the default provider and has in some cases been excluded.

It would not be unusual to hear the government's plans described as neoliberal – and this may of course be true. But a tendency on the left to ascribe the cause of anything remotely right-wing to neoliberalism of one sort or another has blunted the concept's analytical utility.

This has come to matter a great deal in the last five years. When our economic model suffered near financial collapse and had to be saved by a series of state-led rescue packages, the left lacked the intellectual resources to capitalise on this legitimacy crisis. Far from a paradigm shift, we are left with the paradox whereby systemic failings have strengthened a number of the key principles and institutions on which neoliberalism rests.

To begin to explain this paradox, Philip Mirowski's *Never Let A Serious Crisis Go To Waste* traces the genealogy of neoliberalism from its origins in the first meetings of the Mont Pelerin Society during the late-1940s. The book's starting point and central thesis, that neoliberalism is a set of commitments about the nature and organisation of knowledge, helps begin to separate it from unspecified principles of laissez-faire or right-wing conspiracy theories with which it is popularly associated.

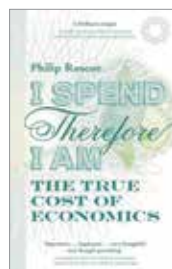
For neoliberals, human faculties can never achieve the completeness and perspective that the market does, because knowledge is necessarily partial, incomplete and dispersed. This strong epistemic commitment was expressed most forcefully by Friedrich Hayek, the Austrian economist best known for his 1944 *The Road to Serfdom* and who did more than anyone to establish the intellectual architecture of neoliberalism.

This claim forms a central premise of the neoliberal critique of socialist planning. Attempts by government de-



### Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste: How Neoliberalism Survived the Financial Meltdown

Philip Mirowski  
Verso, £20.00



### I Spend Therefore I Am: The True Cost of Economics

Philip Roscoe  
Viking, £16.99

partments to rationally plan economic outcomes commit the fallacy of trying predict the 'public interest'. Only the market, a powerful 'information processor', by using price signals to aggregate this dispersed knowledge, can result in outcomes which are preferable for all. But planning of the kind advocated by Hayek's contemporary Keynes is not just technically misconceived. Attempts to determine one economic outcome over another always involves imposing special interests over those of the majority.

Criticisms of this kind highlight the anti-elitist current in neoliberal thought. It rejects the epistemological authority not only of socialist planners but any collective or official expertise, whether intellectuals, monopolies, bureaucracies or trade unions. Outwardly at least neoliberalism is a highly populist doctrine which invests ultimate power in the choices of individuals.

Some parts of this account can seem philosophically dubious, not least claims about the 'natural' power of market processes, the outcomes of which human faculties could not comprehend. In fact, Mirowski shows the opposite is true: neoliberalism is constructivist programme which uses the state to impose market conditions in previously non-economic areas of social and political life.

Unlike the doctrines of classical laissez-faire with which it is often associated in debate, real neoliberalism does not preclude a strong state but in fact relies on it. The state is a necessary condition of neoliberal governance, which elevates the principles, techniques and conventions of the market above all others. Scholars such as Jamie Peck have identified this need for the state as one of the paradoxes on which neoliberalism is founded: "The unattainability of its fundamental goal – frictionless market rule."

Reading these passages in Mirowski's book I was reminded of Ed Miliband's interview with the *Financial Times* last year in which the Labour leader said that "markets don't just drop down from outer space, perfectly formed". At the time observers may have read in this remark the influence of writers such as Karl Polyani, whom other Labour thinkers have cited approvingly. Mirowski





© CCGP Grey.com

reminds us that, contrary to popular belief, the neoliberals don't see perfectly formed markets as the natural state of affairs either.

The dependence on the state is just one of the paradoxes identified in *Never Let A Serious Crisis Go To Waste* that have helped neoliberalism to survive the financial crisis. In another case, the outward rejection of elite authority is questioned by the hierarchical control of what Mirowski characterises as the 'Neoliberal Thought Collective': the network of think tanks, media outlets and business corporations working in concentric rings and at differing levels of abstraction to aggressively promulgate the principles of neoliberalism. The reality of this highly organised intellectual and political apparatus, a 'Russian Doll' in the book's metaphor, is clearly at odds with the official philosophical commitments of Hayek and his fellow travellers.

The polemical register of *Never Let A Serious Crisis Go To Waste* does not lend itself to a careful explanation of theories underpinning the debates which have surfaced since the financial crisis. Philip Roscoe's *I Spend Therefore I Am* is not lacking in this regard. Despite the title's suggestive Cartesian pun, Roscoe mercifully avoids a re-run of how modern societies know 'the price of everything and the value of nothing'. Instead he offers a survey of ideas, predominantly taken from economic sociology and anthropology, aimed at uncovering the consequences of economics.

However, Roscoe's guiding insight comes not from sociology or anthropology but philosophy. In the mid-1950s in a series of lectures at Oxford on the philosophy of language, J.L. Austin set about to overturn then dominant theories of logical positivism by arguing that sentences can be 'performative'. The defining feature of performative utterances is that they do rather than describe things. In Austin's example, when we say 'I name this ship the *Queen Elizabeth*' the speaker does not report on a state of affairs but brings it into being. The same occurs when a bride or groom utters the words 'I do'.

According to Roscoe, economics is a similarly performative discipline. Economic rationality and calculative

*When the left seeks to challenge neoliberalism it should take aim at the political settlement in which social goods are increasingly evaluated according to price and competition*

decision making are not natural features of our worldview but states of affairs brought into being by instruments of law and other economic rules. In this case conventional economic theory is neither a neutral or descriptive enterprise, but a view about what should be the case.

There are obvious similarities here with Mirowski's analysis, for whom the logic of neoliberalism is internalised and then reinforced by individuals. Taking direction from the late studies of Michel Foucault, Mirowski describes a neoliberal selfhood in which individuals are implored to understand themselves as portfolios for entrepreneurial risk-taking and where private consumption is afforded a defining, totemic status. This 'art of the self' is a far cry from earlier accounts, based on concepts of self-knowledge and the public sphere.

Certain points in *I Spend Therefore I Am* are testing. At times the prose reminded me of poor self-help texts ('I will show you this phenomena [the performativity of economics] in everyday settings: shopping...falling in love, falling ill, even in dying...'). At times it is strange: it is implied that David Willetts, minister for universities and science, is a neoliberal because he serves on the board of the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

But the book rewards perseverance because its best sections raise significant sociological questions about economics which are sidelined from mainstream debate. One is the place of markets and, more specifically, price as the dominant technique of valuation in modern societies.

*I Spend Therefore I Am* reminds us that the defining feature of neoliberalism is the extension of a market-based mode of valuation further and further into the realm of social life. When the left seeks to challenge neoliberalism it should take aim at the political settlement in which social goods are increasingly evaluated according to price and competition. How far it would be possible to reverse this process is questionable. But the instances of contingency cited by Roscoe where markets cannot adequately price the worth of goods, most obviously in the case of the environment, provide the tools to take up a more critical approach.

For some readers Roscoe's recommendation to draw on the spirit of Occupy and expand alternative forms of economic culture such as time banking and local currency schemes will fall short of the situation in which "everyday" neoliberalism has sunk so deeply into the cultural unconscious". But given the countervailing forces at play, not least the declining generosity of the welfare state and rising inequality, these may represent the beginnings of an alternative political economy. Mirowski is more pessimistic still, charging the Occupiers with nostalgia for a golden age which is long past.

Loosening the grip of neoliberalism on public and political life will come from reviving a commitment to the public sphere and challenging the view that economic outcomes are beyond the control of politics. Both books show how neoliberalism has cynically eroded economic democracy by cultivating hopelessness about the capacity of governments to steer national progress. An alternative means giving thought to economic models, techniques of evaluation and indicators of success which can look beyond the assumption that value is only created through competition and price. That is the challenge facing the left today. ■

## Building a new economy

Deborah Stoate reflects on the debate surrounding social inequality and responsible capitalism at the Fabian regional conference in Birmingham



The *Times* headline on 13 March 2014 read: "Capitalism is driven by greed, claims Labour front bencher". Well, who'd have thought it! This stunning oxymoron was distilled from a fascinating and detailed speech by Stephen Timms MP at a Fabian regional conference in Birmingham on 8 March entitled 'The New Economy: Responsible capitalism?' He outlined the ways in which capitalism unchecked was indeed irresponsible and yes, greedy. For illustration, he cited the proliferation of betting shops and particularly the operators of betting terminals in bookies, which gambling companies know to be dangerous but install anyway, being prepared to put profit before people's lives.

Yet Timms also claimed capitalism can be made to be responsible, sustainable and creative. It just needs to be incentivised to behave in this way through environmental improvements, paying the living wage, and recruiting young workers and the long term unemployed, for instance. This, he said, was the challenge for the next Labour government – to provide a framework to control capitalism's bad behaviour, as already outlined in Ed Miliband's 2011 'predator' versus 'producer' analysis.

Later councillor Stewart Stacey and Gisela Stewart MP outlined ways in which Birmingham led the responsible capitalism field, particularly with their 'Birmingham business charter for social responsibility'. The charter is surely a model for all cities to use with its guiding principles for the council being local employment, partnering communities, good employment practices, environmental sustainability and procuring ethically.

Also a local MP, Liam Byrne talked about how we must revolutionise social mobility by investing in early years education and vocational skills. He called for us to stand up for unity in our local communities by rejecting the three basic Tory tenets of cyni-

cism, scepticism and pessimism – to which I would add their active encouragement of apathy.

So, the conference wanted to know, how can the issue of responsible capitalism and social mobility be truly addressed while, according to a recent Oxfam study, the top five richest families in Britain are worth more than the poorest 20 per cent of the population? Apparently Oxfam's spokesman said: "Britain is becoming a deeply divided nation with a wealthy elite who are seeing their incomes spiral up whilst millions of families are struggling to make ends meet. It's deeply worrying that these levels of wealth inequality exist in Britain today".

### Regional Fabian conferences attempt to have those big debates and to have them outside of London – that's what local Fabian societies are for

So will toughening the rules within which capitalism operates in Britain today – as some at the conference called it, tinkering around the edges – make a real difference to social inequality and create a truly 'new economy'? This is not a new debate in our movement. Read paragraph one of Fabian tract number one, 'Why are the many poor?' and prepare to be unsurprised that we really haven't moved on very far since 1889. It reads: "We live in a competitive society with capital in the hands of individuals. What are the results? A few are very rich, some well off, the MAJORITY IN POVERTY and a vast number in misery. Is this a just and wise system, worthy of humanity? Can we or can we not improve it?"

People recognise now, as then, that the old political economy is failing them and that they are being exploited but as Fabian polling has shown, they are wary of wholesale change based on a strident ideology. Most people, however, would probably say that they want some change. They are furious with bankers and politicians, energy companies, tax avoiding companies – you name it. And the party who can articulate how to reach that holy grail of a new economy which will effect change in everyday life without the wholesale overthrow of capitalism is the Labour party.

The debate goes on (and on) as the general election approaches. It is interesting that exactly the same debate was raging in 1899. In Fabian tract 51 'Socialism: True and False', Sidney Webb writes: "But we

cannot rise above mere denunciation of existing evils, and get that body of systematic political thought which is at present our greatest need unless we clear up our own ideas.... We must explain in the large dialect of a definite scheme what our aims are and where we are going". Plus ça change!

Regional Fabian conferences such the one held in Birmingham attempt to have those big debates and to have them outside of London – that's what local Fabian societies are for. So it's oddly flattering to the local societies that *The Times* feels it important enough to attend, even if they do quote their speakers out of context. **F**

Deborah Stoate is local Fabian Societies officer



© Miliband

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### Regional Conference, Oxford

#### *Inequality and its Discontents*

Saturday 7 June  
Quaker Meeting House, Oxford  
Tickets are £10 inc lunch  
Details to follow

### Annual House of Commons Tea *Is Labour Ready to Govern?*

Tuesday 8 July  
Speakers include Lord Maurice Glasman, Andrew Harrop, Margaret Hodge

Tickets £17 from Deborah Stoate, 61 Petty France or Fabian website

### South Western Regional Conference

Saturday 15 November  
Miramar Hotel, Bournemouth

For information about all these events, please contact Deborah Stoate on 0207 227 4904 or at [debstoate@hotmail.com](mailto:debstoate@hotmail.com)



## Mugsborough revisited

*The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists* is one hundred years old this year, but the novel reminds us of the importance of movement politics, writes Richard Speight



A hundred years ago, in April 1914, *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists* was published. Its author, Irishman Robert Noonan, wrote under the pen name Robert Tressell fearing that the book's content would see him blacklisted from work. But he didn't live to see it printed; he died of tuberculosis in 1911.

The book, when it first appeared differed substantially from the manuscript that Tressell had tried and failed to get published. Much of the novel's firebrand socialism had been removed or toned down and the ending changed. Tressell's original ending, in which Frank Owen looks forward with confidence to "golden light that will be diffused throughout all the happy world from the rays of the risen sun of Socialism" was not restored until the 1955 edition.

But, in spite of these changes, the spirit of the book remained intact. Set in Mugsborough, a fictional equivalent of Hastings, the novel is an examination of the lives of a group of painters and decorators at the time that the Labour party was emerging as a viable political force in Britain. Amid the huge cast of grasping capitalists and venal politicians, it is the workers – the eponymous philanthropists – who receive most of Tressell's ire. Their inability or unwillingness to listen to the socialist teachings of the novel's didactic hero Frank Owen leaves them as people who have nothing because they freely give it all away.

*The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists* emerged as interest in the question of poverty was growing. The Fabians' seminal examination of poverty *Round About a Pound a Week* had been published in 1913. Beatrice Webb's minority report on the poor law had been launched in 1909. But Tressell's novel has stood the test of time far better. The immediacy of Jack Linden's descent into workhouse penury and the outrageous

deprivations of Mugsborough's Liberal and Conservative politicians have continued to give the book resonance to this day.

Anniversaries, and particularly centenar-ies, lead us to question a novel's contemporary relevance and ask what lessons that we can draw from it. But for *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists*, this is a bit of a redundant question. Never out of print since 1914, the book has been required reading for the young socialist for almost the same amount of time. It's a pretty safe bet that almost every Labour politician of the last century has read at least some of it.

**We no longer believe that the scales will fall from the eyes of a naïve working class, triggering the dawn of a new golden age**

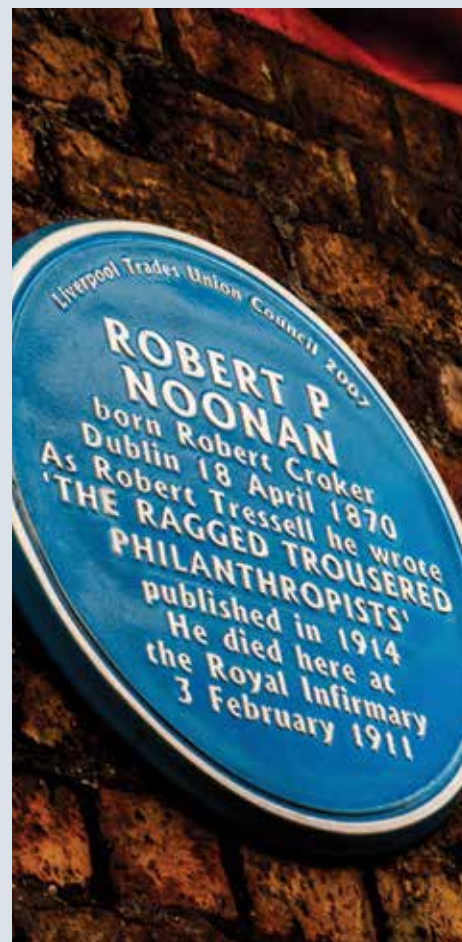
Like Ken Loach's *Spirit of 45*, *Philanthropists* reminds us how far we've come. Within living memory, huge numbers of people in this country lived in unimaginable poverty and misery. Its (partial) alleviation was not due to some national outpouring of compassion but years of sacrifice and political hard graft by our political forebears. At a time when the power of politics is questioned, we should not forget what it has achieved.

We should also not forget, if it's even possible in the current political environment, the contingency of the welfare state. The NHS, the state pension, workers' rights, unemployment protection and all the rest have been fought hard for and should not be lightly cast aside.

Anyone in the Labour party who has spent time campaigning will have a certain amount of sympathy with Frank Owen's fruitless efforts to inspire his co-workers. We constantly knock on the doors of people walking the tightrope of near subsistence wages and minimal job security who nevertheless deride the welfare safety net. This present government's divide and rule strategy of setting the deserving ('hard-working families') and the undeserving ('scrounger') poor against each other are instantly recognisable in *Philanthropists*.

That doesn't mean that we can stop trying to win the argument. The era of educative socialism is probably over, too worthy and patronising for a jaded and cynical contemporary culture. We no longer believe that the scales will fall from the eyes of a naïve working class, triggering the dawn of a new golden age.

In many ways our task is now much harder. The people who have been alienated



© Eric The Fish

by the 'same old politics' are not the same as Tressell's decorators. They've seen more and been let down more. It makes being engaging more challenging but no less important.

Labour's current communitarian turn points the way to a politics that reengages people and situates political arguments in their lived experience – a mission that Frank Owen would recognise. We know now that a centralist, paternalist and remote socialism doesn't work. Only by rebuilding our strength as activists and campaigners in our communities will we succeed.

*The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* recalls to us socialism's historic mission: the eradication of poverty, the restoration of dignity to work, and the care and compassion due to all members of society. In any era, these are useful reminders. But it also drives home the importance of movement politics and of the futility of politics on the left if we don't bring people with us. Right now, for the Labour party, this is a lesson that must not be overlooked. **F**

Richard Speight is media and communications manager at the Fabian Society and a Labour party councillor in Thurrock



# Listings

## BEXLEY

Regular meetings. Contact Alan Scutt: 0208 304 0413 or alan.scutt@phonecoop.coop

## BIRMINGHAM

**1 October:** AGM, 7.00 in Priory Rooms, 40 Bull St, Birmingham B4 6AF.7.00  
Contact Andrew Coulson: Andrew@CoulsonBirmingham.co.uk

## BOURNEMOUTH & DISTRICT

**25 April:** Rowenna Davis PPC on 'How Can Labour Win in the South?'

**30 May:** Cllr Andrew Pope

**27 June:** Kate Green MP

Meetings at The Friends Meeting House, Wharmcliffe Rd, Boscombe, Bournemouth at 7.30. Contact Ian Taylor: 01202 396634 or taylorbournemouth@gmail.com

## BRIDGEND

New Society. Contact Huw Morris: huwjulie@tiscali.co.uk or tel 01656 654946 or 07876552717

## BRIGHTON & HOVE

**1 May:** Anneliese Doods and Tracey Hill – MEP candidates on 'UK Labour in the EU' Calvary Evangelical Church, 72 Viaduct Rd, Brighton

**30 May:** BHFS 71st AGM at 7.30. Speaker Ann Black OBE at 8.00. Friends Meeting House, Ship St, Brighton

**27 June:** Prof. Stephany Griffith-Jones on 'Reform of the International Finance System'. Contact Maire McQueeney: 01273 607910 or email mairemcqueeney@waitrose.com

**29 June:** Summer Garden Party. Guests of honour: His Worshipful the Mayor and Mayoress. 2–5pm. Contact Ralph Bayley: ralphbayley@gmail.com

## BRISTOL

Regular meetings. Contact Ges Rosenberg: grosenberg@churchside.me.uk or Arthur Massey 0117 9573330

## CAMBRIDGE

Contact: cambridgefabians@gmail.com  
www.cambridgefabians.org.uk. Join the Cambridge Fabians Facebook group at <http://www.facebook.com/groups/cambridgefabiansociety>

## CARDIFF AND THE VALE

Details from Jonathan Wynne Evans: 02920 594 065 or wynneevans@phonecoop.coop

## CENTRAL LONDON

Details from Giles Wright: 0207 227 4904 or giles.wright@fabians.org.uk

## CHATHAM and AYLESFORD

New Society forming. Contact Sean Henry: 07545 296800 or seanhenry@live.co.uk

## CHISWICK & WEST LONDON

**24 April:** Dr Rupa Huq. PPC for Ealing Central and Acton on 'Politics in Suburbia'  
All meetings at 8.00 in Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall. Details from Monty Bogard on 0208 994 1780, email mb014fl362@blueyonder.co.uk

## COLCHESTER

**10 April:** Eliza Vasquez Walters on 'The Privatising of the Probation Service'  
Friends Meeting House, Church St, Colchester. Details from John Wood on

01206 212100 or woodj@madasafish.com  
Or 01206 212100

## CUMBRIA & NORTH LANCASHIRE

Meetings, 6.30 for 7.00 at Castle Green Hotel, Kendal. For information, please contact Dr Robert Judson at dr.robertjudson@btinternet.com

## DARTFORD & GRAVESHAM

Regular meetings at 8.00 in Dartford Working Men's Club, Essex Rd, Dartford. Details from Deborah Stoate on 0207 227 4904 email debstoate@hotmail.com

## DERBY

Details for meetings from Alan Jones on 01283 217140 or alan.mandh@btinternet.com

## DONCASTER AND DISTRICT

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

## EAST LOTHIAN

**30 April:** Film, Reflections and Social to mark the 30th Anniversary of the Miners Strike. 7.00

**10 August:** Annual Garden Party  
Details of all meetings from Noel Foy on 01620 824386 email noelfoy@lewisk3.plus.com

## EDINBURGH

Regular Brain Cell meetings. Details of these and all other meetings from Daniel Johnson at daniel@scottishfabians.org.uk

## EPSOM and EWELL

New Society forming. If you are interested, please contact Carl Dawson at carldawson@gmail.com

## FINCHLEY

Enquiries to Mike Walsh on 07980 602122  
mike.walsh44@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 Malcolm Perry at malcolmperry3@btinternet.com

## GREENWICH

If you are interested in becoming a member of this local Society, please contact Chris Kirby on cckirby@hotmail.co.uk

## GRIMSBY

Regular meetings. Contact Pat Holland: hollandpat@hotmail.com

## HARROW

We welcome Fabians from all areas. Contact Marilyn Devine: 0208 424 9034

## HASTINGS and RYE

Meetings held on last Friday of each month. Contact Nigel Sinden: fabian@sindenql.com

## HAVERING

**8 April:** Jeanette Arnold AM on 'Free Schools and Academies'

**22 May:** Christian Wolmar on 'A Vision for London'

**4 July:** Dr Carole Tongue on 'Our Europe, Not Theirs'

Contact David Marshall: david.c.marshall@talk21.com, tel 01708 441189 or visit <http://havingfabians.org.uk>

## ISLINGTON

Contact John Clarke: johnclarke00@yahoo.co.uk

## LEEDS

Contact John Bracken: leedsfabians@gmail.com

## MANCHESTER

Society reforming. Contact Rosie Clayton: mcrcfabs@gmail.com  
www.facebook.com/ManchesterFabians

## The MARCHES

Society reforming. Contact Jeevan Jones: jeevanjones@outlook.com

## MERSEYSIDE

Contact Hetty Wood: hettyjay@gmail.com

## MIDDLESBOROUGH

Please contact Andrew Maloney on 07757 952784 or email andrewmaloney@hotmail.co.uk for details

## MILTON KEYNES

Anyone interested in helping to set up a new society, contact David Morgan: jdavidmorgan@googlemail.com

## NEWHAM

Contact Tahmina Rahman: Tahmina\_rahman\_1@hotmail.com

## NORTHUMBRIA AREA

Contact Pat Hobson: pat.hobson@hotmail.com

## NORTHAMPTON AREA

Contact Dave Brede: davidbrede@yahoo.com

## NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE

Contact Richard Gorton: r.gorton748@btinternet.com

## NORWICH

Society reforming. Contact Andreas Paterson: andreas@headswitch.co.uk

## NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.

Contact Lee Garland: secretary@nottsfabians.org.uk, www.nottsfabians.org.uk

## OXFORD

Contact Michael Weatherburn at michael.weatherburn@gmail.com

## PETERBOROUGH

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

## PORTSMOUTH

Regular meetings. Contact Dave Wardle at david.wardle@waitrose.com

## READING & DISTRICT

**May:** Sir David Bell, Steve Rankin, John Ennis and Grant Strudley on 'Motivation, Aspiration and Education'. 8.00 at Reading Quaker Meeting House, 2 Church St, RG1 2SB

**10 July:** Emma Reynolds MP and Cllr Andy Hill. 8.00 at Quaker Meeting House. Contact Tony Skuse on 0118 978 5829 or email tony@skuse.net

## SHEFFIELD

Regular meetings on the 3rd Thursday of the month at The Quaker Meeting House, 10, St James St, Sheffield.S1 2EW  
Contact Rob Murray on 0114 255 8341 or email robertljmurray@hotmail.com

## SOUTH EAST LONDON

**30 April:** Cllr Patrick Diamond on his new book 'Governing Britain: Power, Politics and the Prime Minister', 8.00 at 105 Court Lane, Dulwich SE21 7EE  
Contact Duncan Bowie on 020 8693 2709 or email duncanbowie@yahoo.co.uk

## SOUTH WEST LONDON

Contact Tony Eades on 0208487 9807 or toneyeades@hotmail.com

## SOUTHAMPTON AREA

Contact Eliot Horn at eliot.horn@btinternet.com

## SOUTH TYNESIDE

**14 April:** AGM

**2 May:** Annual Dinner with speaker Kevin Jones MP

Contact Paul Freeman on 0191 5367 633 or at freemanpsmb@blueyonder.co.uk

## SUFFOLK

Details from John Cook on 01473 255131. Email contact@ipswich-labour.org.uk

## SURREY

Regular meetings at Guildford Cathedral Education Centre. Details from Robert Park on 01483 422253 or robert.park.woodroad@gmail.com

## TONBRIDGE & TUNBRIDGE WELLS

For details of meetings contact John Champneys on 01892 523429

## TOWER HAMLETS

Regular meetings. Contact: Kevin Morton 07958 314846, email: towerhamletsfabiansociety@googlemail.com

## TYNEMOUTH

Monthly supper meetings, details from Brian Flood on 0191 258 3949

## WARWICKSHIRE

**24 April:** AGM and speaker Andrew Harrop. General Secretary, Fabian Society.

All meetings 7.30 at the Friends Meeting House, 28 Regent Place, Rugby. Details from Ben Ferrett: ben\_ferrett@hotmail.com or <http://warwickshirefabians.blogspot.com/>

## WEST DURHAM

The West Durham Fabian Society welcomes new members from the North East. It meets on the last Saturday of alternate months at the Joiners Arms, Hunwick between 12.15 and 2.00pm – light lunch £2.00. Contact the Secretary Cllr Professor Alan Townsend, 62A Low Willington, Crook, Durham DL15 0BG. Email Alan.Townsend@dur.ac.uk

## WIMBLEDON

Please contact Andy Ray on 07944 545161 or andyray@blueyonder.co.uk

## YORK

Regular meetings on 3rd or 4th Fridays at 7.45 at Jacob's Well, Off Miklegate, York. Details from Steve Burton on steve.burton688@mod.uk

# Fabian News

## SAVE THE DATE

> The Fabian Summer conference 'The Road to the Manifesto' will be held on 28 June 2014 at the Royal College of Surgeons, 35–43 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2A 3PE. Further details to follow soon.

> The 130th Anniversary Gala Dinner will be held on 11 June in central London.

For more information about these events, contact [events@fabians.org.uk](mailto:events@fabians.org.uk)

## Noticeboard

### Subscription rates

The Annual General Meeting on 16 November agreed new subscription rates:

#### Ordinary rate

£42 a year or £3.50 monthly

#### Reduced rate

£21 a year or £1.75 monthly

Students, retired members, and the long-term unemployed may pay the Reduced rate.

### Fabian Fortune Fund

#### WINNERS:

David Yorath £100

Mick Cornish £100

Half the income from the Fabian Fortune Fund goes to support our research programme. Forms and further information from Giles Wright, [giles.wright@fabians.org.uk](mailto:giles.wright@fabians.org.uk)

### Power to People. The New Politics of the Common Good

Politicians talk about the need for people to have more power. Yet Britain remains one of Europe's most centralised societies. Most of us feel our national institutions, from Parliament to big business, are out of touch.

The Fabian Society is working with the Policy Institute at King's College London and a range of other organisations to host a conference on 11 and 12 July 2014, to think practically about how we can distribute power and work better together for the good

of the places we live and work. The purpose is to build a practical consensus for a decentralisation of power, to debate the role of central government and think about how both local and national politics can better enable people to come together to negotiate the common good.

Some of our sharpest politicians will be speaking including Jon Cruddas and Rory Stewart, Maurice Glasman, Laura Sandys and Lisa Nandy. But it'll be a conversation that everyone participating can take part in.

To find out more, and book a ticket, visit the conference website at: <https://commongoodconference.eventbrite.co.uk>

### Labour's Policy Review: Have Your Say

The society is currently running a series of articles on the Fabian Review online looking at Labour's policy review. We're getting submissions from policy experts, Labour party thinkers and members. And we're hosting a series of member-led policy workshops on work and business; living standards and sustainability; education and children; and health and care which will take place on Tuesday 6, Thursday 8, Tuesday 13 and Thursday 15 May. Visit [www.fabians.org.uk/members/policy-review/](http://www.fabians.org.uk/members/policy-review/) for more details and to sign up.

The Fabians are at the heart of Labour debates on power, inequality and social justice – the big issues the party is seeking to address. Please join in online and at local society meetings to discuss these ideas and help Labour on the road to a radical manifesto.

## FABIAN QUIZ



**MAMMON'S KINGDOM:  
AN ESSAY ON  
BRITAIN, NOW**  
*David Marquand*

We have not yet realized the long-term causes, nor learned the lessons, of the financial crisis of 2008. In this wide-ranging new book, David Marquand argues that the follies of British bankers, regulators and politicians were symptomatic of a wider culture of hedonistic individualism which drives us even now. The love of money reigns, and – as Marquand warns – a genteel barbarism looms.

The last half-century has seen the steady erosion of the public realm of citizenship, equity and civic virtue. Our ability to trust one another, essential to democracy and market function alike, is lower in Britain than in most continental countries; and the spectre of 'free choice' has brought us to a pass which few would ever have chosen or desired. Setting out a framework for a new public philosophy founded on civic conscience, Marquand seeks to release the trap into which our culture has stumbled.

*Mammon's Kingdom* is a book for all who feel that we cannot continue on our present path – and want to know what options still remain.

**Penguin has kindly given us five copies to give away. To win one, answer the following question:**

*Every Conservative party leader in the 20th century has served as prime minister, except one. Who is it?*

Please email your answer and your address to: [review@fabian-society.org.uk](mailto:review@fabian-society.org.uk)

Or send a postcard to: Fabian Society, Fabian Quiz, 61 Petty France, London, SW1H 9EU



**ANSWERS MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER  
THAN FRIDAY 13TH JUNE 2014**

---

# THE ROAD TO THE MANIFESTO

---

FABIAN SOCIETY SUMMER CONFERENCE  
**SATURDAY 28 JUNE 2014**

---

ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS  
35-43 LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS  
LONDON WC2A 3PE

---

DETAILS AND TICKETS AT  
**[WWW.FABIANS.ORG.UK/EVENTS](http://WWW.FABIANS.ORG.UK/EVENTS)**