Can the left respond to a changing society?

EDITED BY
Andrew Harrop and Ed Wallis

FOREWORD BY
Ernst Stetter

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FUTURE LEFT

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FOREWORD

Dr. Ernst Stetter

Today, to dare to think about the future – and in particular about a *future left* – may seem idealistic. Why have we set about this task, then? It is because our movement, which shaped the course of the 20th century, is not yet done with its historical mission. On the contrary, the centre left is needed now more than ever.

First things first. To begin with, it is essential to analyse recent developments on the centre-left from a different perspective. Certainly, as a political movement it needs to pay attention to how it is polling and how to acquire the largest possible number of votes at future elections. This, however, can no longer drive its political agenda in absolute terms. The 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s may have been about transforming into *catch-all* parties and winning elections from the centre-ground. But the positioning of the political system and its anchoring in social reality have changed. The current and the next decade will therefore be about proving that the movement is not stuck in its own recent past. Instead, it has to show it can use it as a springboard into the future.

This means that last year's election of Jeremy Corbyn to the position of leader of the Labour party cannot be painted in narrow terms of warring factions in the UK. It needs to be placed in the context of the other, comparable phenomena, of which Bernie Sanders and his performance

in the Democratic primaries seems the most telling. Both politicians have been lifelong adherents of the 'traditional', 'old-fashioned' left. The emergence of both has been unwelcome by their party elites and both have gained unprecedented support from the young generation. Both stood up to talk about issues which they had been fighting on for years and which finally earned a hearing. Therefore unlike the generation of leaders just before them, they did not run on the broad message of 'change' – but rather made their campaigns about consistency and conviction. And this seems to have been precisely what the members, militants and sympathizers wanted – confirmation that the fight for a better future for all has not been given up.

This resonated and, as with any changing of the tide, it has created waves – of both optimism and animosity. On one side, it was claimed that both Jeremy Corbyn and Bernie Sanders changed the terms of the debate – bringing the *real issues* of ordinary people up front. On the other hand, there has also been a lot of criticism of the limits of their respective agendas beyond an expression of criticism and opposition. To that end, the reoccurring question seems to remain: are they carrying the votes of the disenchanted left or are they electable in general terms? It is unclear why commentators insist that these two are two different matters. History proves that the movement has been victorious precisely when it has been able to give voice to those otherwise ignored and stand up, in their name against injustice. The core issue, rather, is in how far they and others in charge of the centre-left parties are able to end their earlier disputes and reunite the parties. This is crucial, as the alternative is a path of further animosities and subsequent splits – should the centre-left continue weakening and bending under the pressure of competitors, especially from the more radical left.

But in order to accomplish a new consolidation, we need to reformulate the left's agenda. It must be done showing

that the movement does have a conviction that after years of global crisis and its consequences, it is now time to drop the mainstream way of 'dealing with it', raise heads from above the calculating sheets and try to search for a new political horizon. It will require courage, as the challenges that need to be solved immediately are so pressing.

Among them is undoubtedly the question of the future of the European Union, in which debate progressive forces should and still can have a stronger voice than they have until now. Of course, we hold our breath until 23 June and the UK's referendum, but it needs saying clearly that the negotiations and the pause caused by them have been destructive. The 'special deal' was arranged, by hijacking the EU agenda for a while and undermining already fragile decision-making processes. This caused a lot of frustration across the member states and their populations, provoking statements of resentment. If today people in the rest of the EU were asked if Britain should stay in, many would say that after all the troubles experienced for years – a divorce may be a better option for everyone. This is obviously untrue, as the cession would be devastating for all. Nevertheless these attitudes indicate how much work progressives will need to put in to restore the sense of solidarity and mutual responsibility upon which the EU was founded.

To that end, the whole project of a united Europe will need rethinking. There is a need to conceptualise the community in a modern way in our rapidly changing, competitive world. It must find ways to restore its strength, while finding a new source for its wealth and prosperity. And it must be able to turn the tides pushing some of its members away from the path of democracy.

These are just a few of the issues that this pamphlet touches upon – offering solid analysis and concrete proposals on how to proceed. I am particularly proud that it has been realised as another Fabian Society and FEPS

publication, and I would especially warmly recommend the introduction by Andrew Harrop – who summarises the issues at stake. Last but not least, I would like to thank Ed Wallis and Ania Skrzypek for their editorial efforts – and also all the honourable authors for their impressive, inspiring and daring contributions.

Dr. Ernst Stetter
FEPS Secretary General

INTRODUCTION: THE SPIRIT OF REVISIONISM

Andrew Harrop

The events of 2015 proved that the British left needs a fundamental intellectual re-set. In less than six months, mainstream social democratic ideas were rejected twice over, with Ed Miliband's bitter general election defeat and Jeremy Corbyn's victory over the traditional centre left. 19 years after Tony Blair's first election victory, it is the end of the road for a political project that began in the dark days of 1983.

This crisis is not unique to Britain, however. All over Europe the centre left is struggling to define a new creed, in the face of unprecedented economic dislocation and the challenge of populist movements. Building on past achievements is no longer enough. It is time to go back to the fundamentals.

So when we started making plans for this book, we turned to a similar re-set moment in the left's past and sought inspiration from the *New Fabian Essays*, the foundation text of post-Attlee revisionism. Published in 1952, those essays brought together a new generation of Labour thinkers – including Crosland, Jenkins, Mikardo, Crossman and Healey – with the aim of moving beyond the ideas of the 1945 government.

The essays were not a rejection of the Attlee legacy, nor a tack to left or right on the passing questions of the day.

Instead the essayists' aim was to rebuild the foundations of social democratic ideas, to reflect the fast-changing world around them. They succeeded, and the *New Fabian Essays* marked the turning point in Labour's 20th century thought, where egalitarianism supplanted collectivism as the organising idea of the British left.

The essays were an explicit reproach both to the theoretical purity of unbending, doctrinal socialism; and to pragmatic reformist government when it becomes untethered from underpinning principles. Today, the same critique is true. Renewal cannot come from the sort of Blairite hero-worshiper who is unable to move on from the politics of the mid-2000s; nor from the die-hard Corbynite, with beliefs lodged in permafrost since the 1980s.

In any case, arguments about the degree to which Labour should oppose austerity or the detail of the UK's security commitments do not establish new principles. Crosland wrote in 1952 that "dissension between Gaitskellites and Bevanites has no relevance to the future of socialism". Then, as now, the issues at stake "raised no issue of long-term principle, nor threw into relief the direction of future advance".

The intellectual energy behind the 1952 essays was instead a deep engagement with how the world had changed since the ideas of the 1945 government had emerged. And in this book we have been guided by the same spirit, and sought to explore how the left should move on from the worldview of both 1983 and 1997, to reflect the Britain of the 2020s.

As the introduction to the 1952 essays remarked, even the best ideas eventually get out of date: "partly due to the achievements of the Labour movement…partly due to changing social conditions" and partly "from inadequacies in the original analysis". Almost 65 years later, those words remain the starting point for any project of renewal. So in our search for a new revisionism for the 2020s we

begin by examining the lessons from the recent past and those 'changing social conditions' which will define the future.

Looking to the past

It is a paradox of successful political projects that they burn themselves out by achieving their most significant objectives. That was certainly the case for the 1945 government, with its success in creating the post-war mixed economy. But it was also the case for New Labour. One reason Labour needs to renew is because the 1997 government changed Britain for the better. Indeed, in some cases this change was so profound that the Conservatives have chosen to build on Labour's achievements, as in the case of gay rights and the minimum wage.

So a project of social democratic revision does not face the challenge of slashing pensioner poverty or achieving high employment. The country now has a near-universal system of early years education, sends half its young people to university and educates many of its poor children very well. New life was breathed into the NHS and social housing, with the quality of each transformed. And the case for a carbon neutral economy was won.

Not only have these and other achievements significantly altered Britain's social and political order, but they have also created a new context for the left's intellectual journey. As the 1952 essayists said, we must not re-fight old battles, by seeking to do a little more of the same. The achievements of the past are not a model to replicate, but foundations on which to build something new.

So the left must not settle for a defensive, conservative politics that seeks to reset things to how they were when Labour was last in office. As Crosland warned in his Fabian essay, intellectual renewal must not be confused with "the defence of past achievements" or "repair

and consolidation" in the face of reaction from the right. That means, for example, that we must oppose austerity without giving the impression that matching 2010 spending levels is an end in itself.

To renew, the left needs a clear-headed appreciation of where our recent analysis was wrong or incomplete. On economics, social democrats must be equally challenging of 'old' and 'new' Labour. Over the least 30 years, the British left was right to reject state socialism; but wrong to be so relaxed about the UK's particular variety of capitalism. It was right to focus on poverty; but wrong to pay so little heed to inequality between top and middle. And, linked to these two points, it was insufficiently attentive to assets and debt, as drivers of both inequality and financial risk.

In office Labour was also right to insist on more productive and consumer-oriented public services; but wrong to focus on top-down control and market incentives as the way to bring this about. It was too wedded to means-testing, as the most efficient solution to poverty, without sufficiently considering the merits of universal or contribution-based alternatives. It failed to build enduring institutions to entrench its goals, which meant that progress on issues like child poverty could quickly be reversed. And its paltry record on reforming taxation, improving vocational education and increasing housing supply shows that the party did not grasp how strategically important these issues were.

The left also failed to appreciate the feedback loops between government action and public attitudes. It was too slow to recognise that unprecedented EU and global immigration would have profound social, cultural and political implications. And it did not anticipate the attitudinal consequences of devolution. Social democrats inadvertently stoked both anti-migrant and nationalist sentiments, and these in turn helped alienate Labour from many of its working-class supporters.

This is not an exercise in blame, however. Understanding past analytical inadequacies is only useful if it is used to draw lessons for the future. Looking forward, on economics, the left must learn to be activist, but not statist; it needs to rethink its principles and priorities for the welfare state; and it must think about public policy, as Margaret Thatcher did, as a tool to 'change the soul'.

Changing social conditions

Since the 1980s and 1990s Britain has also changed in ways that have little to do with either the successes or failures of the Labour party. Above all, we live in a different economic world. For although the crisis of 2007/2008 revealed long-standing vulnerabilities, which New Labour might have tackled sooner, it also ushered in a new and unforeseeable chapter in our business history.

The stagnation of productivity and pay is now the critical economic question of our times. In the last decade both output per worker and real earnings have barely risen, despite the backdrop of exceptionally loose monetary policy. No one can say with any certainty when this picture might change. So, unlike in recent decades, the task of turning investment and innovation into rising output and higher pay must be the left's over-riding economic goal. And it is a challenge we must address in the context of a globalised economy, which has reduced the bargaining power of typical British workers, even as it has brought huge benefits to the people of middle income nations and economic elites in the west.

At the same time, the left must adapt to the consequences of wage stagnation and address the new challenges it has thrown up. Perhaps the most pressing is the question of intergenerational distribution. Since the crisis, the living standards of young adults and families have been hit the hardest; by contrast retirees have seen their pensions

protected and their assets rise in value. As a result, for the first time in history typical retired households now have higher living standards than those of working age. And yet in the context of austerity, special protection for pension and healthcare spending has skewed the balance of expenditure towards old age, and away from support for young families and investment in the future.

But spending less on older people is not the answer because, even now, Britain is ill-prepared for rapid population ageing in the 2020s. The NHS is divorced from social care and housing support, and is still designed to address discreet illnesses, rather than the prevention and management of chronic, complex and overlapping conditions. Over the next 10 years demand for health and care services is likely to increase even faster than today, as older people live longer with disease and disability, and as the annual numbers of deaths starts to rise after decades of decline. And the chances of family and friends stepping in to fully bridge the gap are slim: many more people are living alone; there are fewer traditional, nuclear families; and most people are working flat-out at the time their parents need care.

Meanwhile, digital technology is driving rapid change in the way we work, consume, communicate and access public services. Technology is creating opportunities for control and choice, as the age of hierarchy, standardisation and scale is supplanted by horizontal networks, collaboration and personalisation. But the digital revolution is also giving rise to new concentrations of power and risks of exploitation, with our economic lives becoming more atomised, commoditised and fragile. In this age of individuality people face more complexity, instability and risk as well as greater freedom.

This has serious consequences for pay and the quality of work. In the future, if there is no workplace organisation to bid up wages, or long-term sectoral partnerships

to redesign occupations around skilled work, then rates of pay will stagnate and the middle of the labour market will contract further. There are even those who predict that a radical new wave of automation might destroy more jobs than it creates. This would imply an end to full employment, to upward pressure on wages and hence to rising domestic consumption, the usual driver of British economic growth.

As collective, risk-sharing institutions decline people seem to be becoming more individualistic. The British today have a strong sense of personal responsibility, but also rising expectations about others and weakening social deference. The latter often takes the form of healthy scepticism about economic and political elites, but it is also tipping over into populist contempt which, on a political level, is reflected in the rise of Faragism and Corbynism. The collapse of trust in politics, as a vehicle for improving people's lives, is now itself a major barrier to achieving change.

A future left agenda

This is the landscape for the left's renewal in the 2020s: new social facts; new ways of seeing the world; and new foundations, in the shape of Labour's past achievements. Together this degree of change suggests a political project which must differ significantly from Labour programmes of the recent past. The authors in this book explore different dimensions of the world of the 2020s and the shape of responses in much more detail. But here let me conclude by sketching some possible directions of travel, on four key fronts.

First there are two questions which the 1945 government set out to solve: how to grow and share prosperity in a **mixed economy**, shaped by government activism and private enterprise; and how to pool risks and create opportunity with a **welfare state** designed for its times.

Both questions need new answers to reflect our age. Then there is the challenge posed by the 1952 revisionists, of how to secure **equality and substantive freedom**, which alas remains unanswered to this day. And finally, there are questions that have emerged since their time, arising from social liberation and economic globalisation: issues of personal, national and communal affiliation; of our relationships with family and locality; and of Britain's status in an uncertain world. Together this comprises the new **politics of identity**.

A new mixed economy

The 1950s revisionists assumed that the post-war mixed economy would become part of the furniture. But within 30 years it had been supplanted by a neo-liberal order with a negligent conception of the role for government. The left needs to revive the spirit of activism which pervaded the post-war period, but without the baggage of nationalised industries and national plans. The task for the 2020s is not to recreate Keynes' version of the planned economy, but to build a new model of a mixed market, shaped by enterprise, competition and government action, designed for the global, digital age.

Government leadership and fair, open markets must be the twin pillars of productivity growth and broad-based prosperity. The government must again be an economic leader, in the way that was unremarkable in post-war Britain and is unremarkable today in so many other European economies.

- **Leadership and coordination:** use investment, regulation and market signals to steer the economy in pursuit of long-term goals, above all decarbonisation; create government-industry partnerships to reshape sectors, jobs and skills; target full employment and asset price stability with monetary and fiscal policy.

- **Investment and capacity:** significantly increase public investment on infrastructure, development and innovation, in ways that crowd-in private spending; promote new public, mutual or non-profit players in failing markets like housebuilding or energy to boost capacity and change behaviours.

- **Risk and economic power:** use regulation to challenge the market power of dominant incumbents; initiate new opportunities for worker and consumer collectivism to redress imbalances in economic power and spread ownership and responsibility; re-create ways to share economic risks, from collective pensions to job creation programmes.

Refounding social insurance

Thanks to successive generations of social democrats, the welfare state of Beveridge and Bevan still stands to this day. But it needs updating for new risks, needs and expectations. The left in the 2020s must set out to recreate what Beveridge called 'social insurance' for the modern world we face. Its goal must be to match need and spending power, over the course of our lives, with entitlements derived from past and future contributions.

Since the turn of the century we have already made good progress on reforming pensions and only incremental improvement will be needed in the 2020s. But we are failing to respond to other changing needs, especially the nature of today's ill-health, housing need and the economic vulnerabilities of modern working life.

- **Meeting health-related needs:** integrate health, care and disability support, in a way that maximises personal control; secure consent for higher public spending, by creating earmarked 'health taxes'; robustly regulate and 'nudge' to improve the nation's health.

- **Financial support before pension age:** commission a new Beveridge plan for working-age protection that reflects modern economic risks; introduce extra tiers of contribution-based benefits and lifetime accounts; consider how to merge tax reliefs and universal credit into a single system of financial support.

- **Affordable housing:** drive a massive increase in housebuilding, in sustainable, mixed communities, by increasing land supply and construction capacity; promote large-scale borrowing for social housebuilding, through gilts or special 'housing bonds', secured against future rents and housing benefit savings.

Equality and freedom

The 1952 essayists argued that the new hallmark of social democracy should be a radical egalitarianism of human capital, substantive freedom and social connection. In this, their ideas foreshadowed later, multi-faceted conceptions of equality, such as the capability approach pioneered by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. But they gave the politics of equality an important British twist, with their emphasis on reducing the social distance and status insecurity associated with class.

Today, inequality is still rampant, and in guises that would be depressingly familiar to social democrats of the 1950s. The Fabian essayists understood that the advance of equality and practical freedom was not a narrow question of income distribution through the labour market, tax and benefits. In the 2020s we need new strategies to tackle the priorities they identified and reduce inequalities of opportunity, wealth and power.

- **Life chances and education:** support stronger relationships and parenting, including more time with children, especially for fathers; demand world-class

teaching, facilities and curriculum for the bottom third, so no child is set up to fail; focus support in teenage years on ambition, emotional wellbeing and cultural capital; create credible skills and work pathways for every young person aged between 18 to 24.

- **Equalising wealth:** create nudges and subsidies for low and middle earners to save and build assets, especially younger generations; reform financial and monetary policy to target stable house prices with the aim of reversing the decline in homeownership; significantly increase the taxation of land, assets and large pension savings; develop ideas for UK sovereign wealth funds.

- **Power, status and participation:** spread people power within public services, including personal control and collective leadership; increase participation and power for employees in more collaborative workplaces; broaden and deepen institutions of local civil and political participation.

The politics of identity

Politics is out of touch with people's lives. Trust in politicians is declining, the distance between elector and elected is widening and authenticity and conviction seem to be in short supply, in our professionalised political culture. In part this stems from the way we practise politics and that must radically change. But it also arises from the social forces sweeping through society, which pose particular challenges for the left. With communities becoming more diverse, deference on the wane, and the main route into positions of leadership being universities not workplaces, it has become very hard for social democrats to really be tribunes of the people.

In the second half of the 20th century the left's politics took community for granted. It reflected an industrial age of scale and homogeneity and was characterised by uniform, nationwide and impersonal collective action. Inadvertently other pre-1945 traditions, based on smaller-scale, self-organising forms of collectivism were swamped: co-operation, municipalism, guild socialism. Now that we cannot take old social bonds for granted, a new politics of identity must again nurture and cherish solidarity and collectivism in people's everyday lives. This means encouraging collective, autonomous institutions; and resisting the temptation to always intervene with national policy tools.

Lastly, many people also sense that the moral intuitions of social democrats are not the same as theirs. We seem only to value care, fairness and liberation, while most people also honour loyalty, authority and sanctity, to use the lexicon of the US academic Jonathan Haidt. In the context of rapid social change and an increasingly elderly population, the left has been too dismissive of people's anxieties and aspirations with respect to security, tradition and the non-material dimensions of life. We must not sacrifice our old values, but we need to show we share all those dimensions of morality that people hold dear; and, in particular, find a new confidence to talk about family, patriotism and immigration.

- **Politics:** demand fundamental organisational and cultural change within political parties, so they speak with conviction, and work alongside communities and civic society; embrace an approach to politics focused on institutions and communities not policy levers; investigate reforms to democratic institutions to bring politicians closer to people's lives.

- **Place:** adopt radical and coherent devolution of money, responsibility and democracy to cities and counties

with a strong sense of community; lead debates with confidence on English identity and be open-minded about future England-wide and regional governance.

- **Immigration:** make credible promises on managed migration, including lower annual immigration than today; work with employers to make them less dependent on migrant labour and exploitative employment relationships; take a tough approach to integration, focused on the responsibilities of newcomers.

1 | THE REAL FUTURE OF WORK

Rachel Laurence and Marc Stears

No one can understand the future of work unless they understand the everyday lives of working people. So instead of the usual argument between 'better work' and 'beyond work', a really transformative approach would bring a new set of questions to the heart of the discussion: the geographic make-up of the local economy, the location of schools and of amenities, the balance between paid work and unpaid care, and the ways in which people relate work to other sources of meaning in their lives.

Overlooking the Thames, a stone's throw from Westminster and Whitehall, and tucked behind the glamorous houses of Belgravia, is a modest social housing estate in Pimlico. It is across the river from the office where we both work, and is home to a group of mothers whose story perfectly encapsulates the sharp end of London's unequal economy. Surviving on low incomes, and keen to work, they find that the apparent luck of living in one of the few remaining blocks of social housing within a very wealthy part of town comes together with a particular set of challenges. State schools in the area are oversubscribed and their children are spread between schools scattered across the borough. The underground is too expensive for most to use regularly, and the bus connections across the area are surprisingly poor. Food shops local to them are small and expensive. For an affordable family

shop they must travel into the neighbouring borough. They are adept at managing all this – but quite simply, it adds additional time, and additional hassle, to the unpaid job of caring for their families.

And what does it mean for paid work, the subject of our essay? Well, it means only a particular kind of job can really help. A job that offers security, a degree of flexibility and, crucially, a decent hourly wage. One of these women told us she used to work as a dinner lady in her children's primary school but on these wages she couldn't afford for her own kids to have school dinners. Another had to give up her job as a beautician when the hourly cost of childcare – linked with the extortionate cost of local premises to childcare providers in central London – crept too far past her frozen hourly wage. Shift work at a supermarket, another had found, could pay ok, but the shifts simply did not match with the opening times of the nursery, and no flexibility could be negotiated. What's more, there was a queue of students ready to fill the job she reluctantly relinquished.

So what do reformers – whether of left or right – actually have to say to people faced with these challenges, people caught between full time unpaid care, or jobs which simply don't pay their living costs? How can we plot a path to a better, more secure and more rewarding future? Put most simply: is there a vision for the future of work that speaks directly to this experience?

Better work or beyond work? Two reforming traditions

Those are our questions for this essay. But they are hard questions to answer. Hard, in part, because of the complexity of the economic, political and social phenomena that makes this situation up. And hard too because of contradictory instincts about the issue at their heart: work itself.

For decades, there has been a divide between the argument for 'better work' and an argument that we should

move 'beyond work'. In practice, for the Pimlico families, this is the question of whether they just need access to higher paid, more secure work, – whether that's about creating more such jobs, or equipping them with better skills, better transport links and better childcare options? Or, whether, in fact, they need a guarantee of financial security and stability to underwrite the vital job they are already doing in bringing up the next generation without the need to find paid employment?

Reformers like the Fabians have always had this divided relationship to the very idea of paid work. The question of whether we should seek 'better work' or move 'beyond work' stalks the Fabian tradition.

On the one hand, reformers have often turned to work – good work, better work – as the way out of fundamental social problems. For at least two centuries now, work has often been understood not as a source of income but as a source of strength, pride and identity. Across that time, women fought for the ability to work alongside men and to be treated the same at it. The Jarrow marchers campaigned for a right to work. William Morris and John Ruskin celebrated the community that can be found in labour. The very idea of a 'working class' was at the centre of political renewal and gave rise to the name of the political party whose interests it was supposed to represent: 'Labour'.

On the other hand, work has also always been something that Fabians and their fellow-travellers have wanted to help people escape. Back before the first world war, Bertrand Russell dreamed of providing everyone with an equal income so that they could choose how much or little they wanted to work for themselves. In the middle of the 20th century, Anthony Crosland and his colleagues hoped that the welfare state would enable millions more to escape the drudgery of wage slavery and be able to take greater pleasure in leisure, community and the arts. Even back before that, Karl Marx himself famously – or infamously

– imagined a world where people could go fishing in the morning and write poetry in the evening, surrounded by an abundance that they did not need to strive to create with the efforts of their own hands.

Better work or beyond work? The current debate

This tension is not just a historic artefact. It has been surprisingly persistent in mainstream political and public debate in the last five or six years.

For much of the last parliament, the focus of all parties – not just of the left but of the right too – was on work, its creation and its proper remuneration. The fear on this account started with worklessness. Shortly before the last election, George Osborne committed the Conservatives to being the party of full employment, a position that had escaped them ever since the 1980s. Others, meanwhile, talked instead both about the quality of work and of its material rewards. The fear was that Britain was creating an 'hour glass' economy – polarised between high-paying, high-skill jobs at the top and low-paying, low-skill jobs as the bottom – and that we were enduring a recovery that might have been 'jobs rich' but was 'wages poor'. The emphasis Ed Miliband placed on the 'squeezed middle' spoke directly to this concern. So too did research by the Resolution Foundation and others, which emphasised that wages had begun to stagnate even before the financial crisis and that they did not appear to be rising with the return of growth. Osborne himself, of course, returned to this theme almost as soon as the election was over, announcing a new national living wage, that went far beyond the reform to the national minimum wage for which Labour had called.

Naturally, these concerns have not died away in the months since. And for many the campaign for 'good jobs' rather than poorly paid, insecure, low-skill jobs remains the centrepiece of a reformist agenda. But these issues have

been joined – in activist and intellectual circles at least – by a new concern: the impact of automation or the rise of the robots. 100 years ago, of course, a particular kind of automation ended some sorts of jobs and created others. The invention of the production line, of early calculating machines, typewriters, telegraphs and telephones, ended the sweep of cottage industries across 19th century Britain and created the office-based, professional new middle class. Now, however, the thought is not about new jobs. It is about no jobs. Automation threatens to do away with jobs altogether. Our century brings the possibility not of creating new accountants but of making accountancy as a vocation redundant. Retail jobs are to disappear as shelves are stacked by androids and tills run by super-sensitive bagging machines. Even surgery is to be conducted more effectively with robotics than with the trained hands and eyes of human beings.

For some, this world without work is dangerous, to be resisted by a turn to humane, value-added jobs, like those that rely on creativity or caring, the kinds of things that no-one can really yet imagine a robot doing very well. But for others, it is a world awash with possibility. Journalists and commentators, from Philip Collins to Owen Jones, have been swept along on a wave of excitement. A world without work could be a world of leisure and personal experience. Radicals are said to be 'inventing the future' and promise a new order of undimmed leisure, with the needs of ordinary people to be funded by an unconditional basic income: that old idea from Tom Paine that if there is a surplus created by the luck of all that it can be shared equally by all.

Slightly less utopian, but of the same vein, is Paul Mason's idea of a 'post-capitalism', within which work does not disappear entirely, but a network of peer-to-peer horizontal forces takes over from the hierarchical wage labour of the past. In this version of the 'new economy', the creativity

and innovation of Silicon Valley sweeps across the rest of the developed world. Here the managerial offices and call centres with which we are familiar are replaced with hubs of independent but interrelated creative entrepreneurs; a new world of technologically-enhanced self-employment, offering a combination of material reward and lifestyle choice not even dreamed of a decade or so ago.

The limitations of the orthodox visions

For some these visions are breathtaking. They are certainly breathless. And for those who feel that history must always tend in a progressive direction they appear to offer some proof of their underlying instincts.

But they are both a long way from the day to day concerns from the mothers in Pimlico with which we began. In fact, both visions – the idea of 'better work' that is more secure, more skilled, more highly paid and the idea of a future 'beyond work' – feel extraordinarily distant from what we know of the British labour market from our own experience. They are, therefore, unlikely to offer much in the way of real solutions to the challenges we face.

And why is that?

It could be because bold, reforming visions of this sort are the wrong place to look. There have always been those in economics who believe we should just settle for how things are. Right now that would mean being satisfied with a recovery in jobs that is, after all, historic. A vision of full employment secured by maximal labour market flexibility and global competitiveness – even if it is in a race to the bottom – does attract some. But the notion that working life in Britain could not be substantially better than it is, does not attract us. And we don't believe it attracts most people either. Most people know that the economy in Britain today isn't working in some fundamental ways. There is widespread awareness of the

dangers of job insecurity, of stubbornly low wages, of a dependence on publicly funded benefits to prop up people's standard of living.

But even if there is a shared critique of the world of work today, there is an equally widespread scepticism about many of the proposed solutions. People don't believe either that a future where robots do the shopping or where everyone goes to university and ends up in middle management is a satisfactory answer in and of itself to the problems people face. Neither the orthodox 'better work' nor the newly energised 'beyond work' solutions are, then, compelling by themselves.

Work and everyday experience

So to understand and plan for the future of work, you need to start not with idealised abstractions or vague visions. You need, instead, to start with the lived experience of working people. Because when you start there, the questions you must ask and the answers you must provide begin to look very different. And the problem for all reformers of work in recent years is this has tended to be the last place they look.

Think, for example, about the people with whom we began this essay and ask what would follow if we allowed them to set the agenda for our discussions about the future of work.

The questions they would ask are, we believe, clear enough. They would be about wages, security and flexibility, for sure. They might even be about technology from time to time. But they would also be about how people's paid time interacts with their unpaid time, or how the unpaid economy as a whole interacts with the paid economy. They would be about the extent of the safety-net people have when paid work doesn't work for them. About whether they have access to assets above and

beyond those provided by paid work, including tangible goods like wealth and housing, but also less tangible ones like personal support networks and a sense of belonging to a place that cares for them. They would be about how long it takes, how expensive it is, how unpleasant it is, to get to and from different kinds of work. Which would take us to how close people live to public services and amenities, be it schools, healthcare, or shops, and the way we plan our highstreets. And they would be about the experience in the workplace itself, not just the possibility of material reward, but the chance to find both some sense of independence and pride, community and solidarity.

What this all highlights is that accessing the labour market is not simply a question of qualifications, aspirations and availability of jobs. Nor is it about the role that technology might play in reshaping the working environment, despite the fact that these questions dominate almost every single aspect of policy discussions about employment. Instead, the geographic make-up of the local economy, the location of schools and of amenities, the balance between paid work and unpaid care, the ways in which people relate work to other sources of meaning in their lives – these questions have got to be right at the heart of the discussion, too. If they are not then we don't understand what we are really doing. And our efforts will fail to improve the real lives of real people.

The real future of work

What we are arguing, then, is that a really transformative approach to work in our future economy must be built on far more than the usual argument between 'better work' and 'beyond work'. To get to the kind of vision we need, we must learn how systemically to tackle the real, and practical, challenge people grapple with when it comes to work.

To do that, we need to do two things.

First, we have to make sure that economic decision making is not isolated from other concerns but is always inter-connected with decisions about the ways in which our cities are laid out, where shops are located, how support networks are properly constructed, what transport infrastructure looks like, and how finance can support industries that are based near to places where people live and bring up their kids. That kind of economic thinking is all too rare in Britain, but it is a commonplace in some other countries, especially in places where economic control is not vested either in a centralised state nor in an abstract market but in responsive and regionally relevant devolved authorities. In other words, where economic decisions are made closer to the people whose lives they will most directly affect.

Second, we have to make sure that working people themselves – and those who want to work but can't – are an integral part of that economic decision making. For too long politicians and reformers of all stripes have talked about work without talking to those who conduct it. There have been promises of policies that work 'for hardworking people' but little sense that the immediate concerns of those who labour are likely to be at the centrepiece of any programme for reform. Our call is for that to change. There is a practical wisdom in lives of work that has been excluded for far too long, and without it both the wrong questions will be asked and the wrong answers pursued.

So, what is the future of work? And how are the best policy solutions to enhance it to be shaped? There seems no doubt that in part, we as a country will have to respond to the problems of skills and training, to do all we can to overcome productivity challenges, to help generate middle-income jobs, just as the advocates of 'better work' have long argued. It seems true, too, that we will need to rise to the challenge of automation, know how to make the best of technology, rather than to see it as a threat to our inherited

understandings of how the labour market works, just as those who call for us to move 'beyond work' insist. But there is also much more to it than either of these theses understand. Because most of all, it needs to be a future that reflects what work really is and what its challenges are for all those millions of people who do it every day. It needs to be a future that puts their concerns and their knowledge right at the centre. And, for reformers, that probably requires the biggest mind-set shift of all: an acknowledgment that anyone who longs for a new economy, needs always to remember that it must be a new economy built by the people for whom it is intended to work.

EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE: WORK

As a wise man once said, we make our own history not under circumstances of our own choosing but under those pre-existing, given and transmitted from the past. And for us in Europe in 2016, the circumstances are clear: quality jobs with decent pay and secure contracts are not on offer – they must be fought for.

In many ways, it has (regrettably) been the UK that has provided the blueprint for the dismantling of collective workplace rights in Europe. Now the flexible labour market is everywhere, yet unevenly distributed, from the Nordic countries to Spain where we find young workers engaged in 200 separate employment 'contracts' per year.

At the heart of this lies the murky notion of accountability – a particular problem at the European level where decision-making can be opaque and responsibility nebulous.

It is not all doom however. In the UK there has been increasing interest in workplace organising – which is fortunate as this is a much more significant resource in other European countries. However, unions need to be more realistic about the workers that they represent. In a period of hyper-flexibility, defending set groups of workers with set contracts is increasingly fanciful – a painful reality for union movements often built on shared notions of professional identity over a century or more. Unions that have fared best throughout the crisis are those with a broader conceptualisation of their role: those that include new groups of workers from ethnic minorities to young workers to those with the most precarious contracts and bogus self-employed.

If unions are to survive and indeed build upon the crisis, they must respond to the world of work as it is, not as they wish it to be.

Ben Egan

2 | THE CENTURY'S CHALLENGE

Lisa Nandy

The move away from an energy system and an economy dominated by fossil fuels to one powered by clean energy is arguably the country's biggest challenge in 100 years, comparable in scale to the industrial revolution. The world is changing, and we must either shape the future or be shaped by it. A modern, progressive response to this challenge has three elements: an active, enlightened and enabling state; a green industrial strategy; and the ambition to secure the active involvement of the widest range of people in building a new economy.

In December 2015 nearly every country in the world came together in Paris to agree to limit global warming to well below 2C. It has set us firmly on a path towards climate safety, with profound implications for the economy, politics and society. With the world's two biggest polluters, the USA and China, signed up to the deal, there is now no question that we can turn back. Nor should we want to.

The implications of climate change for the world's poorest countries have already become apparent. Thanks to rising sea levels, a number of small island states including the Marshall Islands and Micronesia already face the very real possibility of extinction. Water and food shortages have becoming an increasingly important factor in global conflict, with loss of life and displacement of people becoming more common.

But in the UK too the implications of climate change are becoming increasingly clear. For the second time in recent years floods have devastated large swathes of the country, putting homes and businesses under water. Events that used to be once in a lifetime have become much more common. Flood risk projections produced for government conclude that a global temperature rise of 2C will increase the annual damages caused by flooding in the UK by 50 per cent. The Committee on Climate Change also estimate that global warming of 4C or more would mean as many as one million more homes flooded.

With the UK's towns and cities still high carbon emitters (London broke its annual air pollution limits in the first week of 2016), the implications for health and life expectancy are stark. Public Health England estimates 29,000 deaths a year in the UK are caused by air pollution. Studies have also found an association with respiratory diseases, low birthweight and impaired lung development in children, especially in inner cities.

Tackling climate change then is a question of social justice, both for some of the poorest in the UK and overseas. The left cannot afford to stand like King Canute at the shore, waiting for the tide to turn back. But nor too should we pretend that managing this transition is easy. The move away from an energy system and an economy dominated by fossil fuels to one powered by clean energy is arguably the country's biggest challenge in 100 years, comparable in scale to the industrial revolution.

With so many jobs reliant on oil and gas, particularly in the north east of Scotland and north east of England, the consequences of this shift on whole communities are huge. The UK's last deep coal mine closed in 2015, and the government has promised to close the remaining coal fired power stations by 2025. Meanwhile reserves in the North Sea have become harder to exploit and in the last year alone 65,000 jobs were lost.

There is even more at stake than this. The Paris agreement sets us on an irreversible path to a low carbon future. But as the governor of the Bank of England set out in September 2015, the UK is heavily invested in fossil fuels. As the world moves towards a low carbon future, pensions, savings, and the financial system as a whole are extremely vulnerable without a managed transition.

It is understandable then that amongst the public there exists huge public concern, both about the consequences of failing to tackle climate change, and the consequences of doing so. This concern has been heightened by the way in which low carbon policies have been funded, until now, almost entirely through a levy on energy bills. This regressive funding model has left the poorest households paying six times as much for the transition to clean energy compared to the wealthiest, according to IPPR research.

On the political right, climate sceptics and advocates of limited government have united to try to halt investment in clean energy and wider efforts to tackle climate change. They appear to have won this case with the government in relation to onshore wind farms and state investment in this low cost form of energy has ceased entirely.

Meanwhile, the government has slashed solar investment just at the moment when it stood on the cusp of becoming economically competitive, able to survive without government subsidy. This decision cost the industry 1500 jobs overnight, putting at risk up to 18,000 more – half of all jobs in the solar industry – according to the government's own impact assessment. In 2015 the chancellor cancelled £1bn planned investment in carbon capture and storage (CCS), a technology that has the potential to be able to bury carbon emissions underground, with two sites that were due to be developed with private money now no longer able to go ahead. The prime minister recently downplayed the prospect of investment in the

Swansea Bay Tidal Lagoon. Over the next five years the country will lose at least 1 gigawatt of renewable energy generation, equivalent to the energy needed to power 660,000 homes. All this, has led Bloomberg analysts to declare that renewable investment is about to 'drop off a cliff'.

In taking this approach the government has drawn criticism from a range of voices, including from the CBI who recently highlighted the need for stability and clear government leadership, as the constant chopping and changing in energy policy deters potential investment. Former US vice president Al Gore also contrasted the UK's historic leadership on climate change with its current policies and urged the government to change course.

With a government bound by a powerful combination of political and economic forces, the left's response becomes critical. Just as in the 1960s Britain was changed profoundly by the 'white heat of technology', the country is changing again. In 1963 Harold Wilson warned, "it is no good trying to comfort ourselves with the thought that automation need not happen here; that it is going to create so many problems that we should perhaps put our heads in the sand and let it pass by." The choice, he went on, was between "the blind imposition of technological advance" and the "conscious, planned, purposive use of scientific progress". Harold Wilson's four Labour governments were catalysts for the technological and social change the country demanded over half a century ago. Now, as then, the world is changing and we must shape the future, or be shaped by it.

A modern, progressive response to this challenge has three elements: an active, enlightened and enabling state, a green industrial strategy, and the ambition to secure the active involvement of the widest range of people in building a new economy.

An active, investing state

A progressive government could unleash the potential of an active enabling state, prepared to invest in the technology of the future: solar, wind, tidal, CCS and battery technology. Much of this technology is new, and prohibitively expensive to private investors without government backing. But as we have seen in relation to solar power in recent years, the preparedness of governments to invest has helped to unlock private capital and costs have fallen dramatically.

In return countries who have invested early have reaped the benefits of exporting that technology overseas, with the help of a skilled workforce at the vanguard of designing the clean energy system of the future. It is this loss that is the real, long-term damage of the government's decision to cancel investment in CCS, which would have made the UK the first to develop what could be a cutting edge technology.

The way in which this investment is funded will be critical in building a broad public consensus about the future. While currently clean energy schemes are funded almost entirely by energy bill payers, a new settlement, which draws on a combination of central government spending, lending and private capital is essential.

A green industrial strategy

Alongside this the UK needs an industrial strategy to address the reality that many communities in some of the poorest parts of the country stand to lose from the move away from fossil fuels. It must recognise the debt we owe to communities who, through dangerous, difficult and dirty work, powered the industrial revolution. They gave us not just the prosperity but the global influence that allowed us to go to Paris and negotiate that historic agree-

ment to limit global warming to no more than 2C. Just as young people from Wigan and Barnsley powered the jobs of the past, so too could they power the jobs of the future.

The need for an industrial strategy is clear. The jobs that currently exist in energy are often highly skilled, long term and labour intensive. Many of the new jobs that Britain has managed to create in clean energy are shorter term and lower pay. As the local council in Aberdeen, a city badly hit by job losses in the North Sea, has recognised, funding and strategy is needed to reverse this trend and create new, good quality jobs in areas like research and development. It will mean, as the Aberdeen city deal implicitly recognises, ending the deadening debate about state or market. Because in reality a just transition will only ever be realised with the energy and investment of both public and private capital, directed in our common interests.

For too long the debate about energy and climate change has been oppositional in another way too, pitting jobs and growth against progress on global warming, and pitting the poorest in the UK against the poorest overseas. Politicians, commentators, campaigners are too often divided and the public are invited to pick a side. Now that the Paris agreement has signalled that the move to clean energy is inevitable, universal and irreversible, it is surely clear that this debate is a dead end.

People power

The question is not whether the jobs of the future will be created, but who will create them, in the areas where they are needed, to power us through the next century. But this is not something that can be left to governments to undertake on their own. It needs people at its heart. Already, it is becoming clear that communities are taking action where government won't. From a village in Balcombe to council tenants on an estate in Hackney, there are amazing exam-

ples of communities becoming reliant on solar, creating jobs and cutting bills in the process. The knock on social effect is bigger too, strengthening communities, building confidence and creating a growing awareness of, and support for, tackling global warming.

Not every person or community wants to set up their own energy company. But Labour councils around the country have been involved in providing people with a range of ways to get involved, from the support Plymouth has given to a community energy company, allowing people to buy shares in their local scheme, to Nottingham which has set up its own Robin Hood energy company. Increasingly as government withdraws its financial and political support, Labour councils are at the forefront of what the leader of Manchester has called "a clean energy revolution". Ahead of the landmark Paris summit, 60 Labour councils pledged to go carbon free by 2050 and they will work together as part of a Labour initiative to cut the UK's carbon footprint by 10 per cent, covering almost every major town and city in the UK.

The climate change debate has too often paralysed us into inaction. Characterised by worst case scenarios, it can seem too vast and too difficult a challenge to take on. The approach taken by community groups and councils, to work incrementally towards a different, ambitious future is one the left must adopt in coming years. So too, is it a new model of how the state should act in this century, working through and with people, not for them. While national governments will continue to play an important role, increasingly action on climate change is being taken by federal leaders across the world, like the c40 group whose mayors include the mayors of New York, Paris and Rio. As the UK moves towards an increasingly federal system the role of the mayors of county and city regions, such as Greater Manchester and London will become more important.

With Labour out of power at a national level, this regional leadership will be essential in the coming years to ensure that the UK continues to make progress towards climate safety. The challenge posed by climate change can only be solved by core Labour values: the pursuit of social justice, internationalism, solidarity, an active, enabling and empowering state, and a belief that we achieve more through our common endeavour than we achieve alone. It will take all of our talents to tackle global warming. A combination of global ambition and national vision, powered by people, will give us an energy system fit for the challenge of this century.

EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE: ENVIRONMENT

Decoupling economic growth from the exhaustion of our natural resources and the degrading of the environment will be one of most crucial challenges of future decades. This is true not only for economic reasons, but also for reasons of social justice and therefore is paramount to the survival of modern social democracy.

Already today, we see poor and socially disadvantaged groups in our society suffering the most from extreme weather conditions, biodiversity loss and changing climatic conditions. Health issues caused by air pollution, relocation and even displacement due to unbearable living circumstances are becoming growing problems, especially in urban areas.

The responses to this challenge will not just lie in new, innovative, climate friendly technologies, but also in an increased awareness of our shared resources and environment. The Paris agreement of December 2015 laid the foundation for this transformation. National, European and global policies now need to add the substance.

Enabling everyone, especially the socially disadvantaged, to afford clean energy will be one of European social democracy's most important tasks. The protection of people's health and living environment by improving air quality and reducing the consequences of climate change will be another. This gives climate action and environmental protection a new social dimension in a world that faces a growing population and emerging economies that need energy and natural resources to secure higher living standards.

Europe will need to stay at the forefront of intelligent technological developments and be a reliable and trustworthy partner in international climate action. It is our duty as social democrats to connect the principles of social equality and social rights with sustainable development goals.

We are on track, but not there yet.

Jo Leinen

3 | GROWING UP

Dan Jarvis

Today, the path into adulthood is a more bewildering experience than ever before, with rising inequality, new pressures and greater individualism. Many of the institutions that once supported the journey of growing up have been diminished by changes to our economy since the 1980s. In the decade ahead, the challenge for the left is to identify those that are not working and renew them. These institutions can be grouped into three separate phases of growing up: the early years of family; adolescence and the development of a sense of belonging; and the transition into work.

I came into politics because I want to serve the country and contribute to the common good. What is most important to me, is that all our children should be able to make the best of themselves. I want the daughter of a cleaner from Kingstone in my Barnsley constituency to have the same chances in life as the son of a barrister from Kingston-upon-Thames in London.

The experience of growing up today is very different to my own in the 1980s. Then there was a belief that each new generation would be better off than their parents. That is no longer true today. A decade ago the Fabian Commission on Life Chances and Child Poverty highlighted the unequal life chances of young people. In this chapter I want to return to its principal question and ask how we can support children growing up in an increasingly unequal

world. How can we provide all our children with the capabilities they need to thrive?

Growing Up

The sociologist Ken Roberts has a useful metaphor to describe how growing up has changed in the last 50 years. For those who were children in the mid-20th century, adolescence was like boarding a train together. Everyone shared the journey and each understood the destination of adulthood. There would be a job, marriage, children, and a home of one's own. Changes to the route could be made, but only at planned stops. There were first, second and third class carriages, so for some adolescence was much better catered for than for others.

This class inequality was reproduced at the destination. However, by the 1970s there was a greater degree of equality than at any other time in British history. Each generation thought they would do better than the last.

Growing up in late industrial Britain was a shared, if unequal experience. Stations along the way provided limited and standard provisions to improve the journey for all children. A policy of full employment, the growth of the professions and the welfare state allowed for greater social mobility. Many young people were able to move up from third class, to second or first. It was the experience of one of my predecessors as MP for Barnsley Central, Roy Mason. He literally worked his way up from the coal face to high government office.

Three generations on, growing up is more like a car journey. Young people share the same mode of transport but now each travels separately. There is much less sense of sharing an experience. Contact is maintained through the internet and mobile phones.

The car offers the appearance of freedom, but it comes with a much higher level of risk. Each driver has only

the resources available to them, some are driven by their parents, others are trying to hitch a lift. There are greater pressures on young people to make life changing choices and decisions. A successful journey requires a great deal of expense, preparation and planning.

Today's path into adulthood is a more bewildering experience than the train ride of 50 years ago. More than ever before young people must behave like entrepreneurs, inventing their own lives. The cost of this freedom and the loss of clear boundaries has arguably been a rise in mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety. There is confusion about identity, and concern about body image particularly for girls and women, who are still subject to the sexism of being defined by their appearance. Alongside William Beveridge's social evils are new ones like loneliness, a sense of meaninglessness, and the decline of community.

The shift of risk onto individuals and their families is a consequence of the transformation of Britain's industrial economy in the 1980s. The old collectivism has given way to a greater individualism. Millions of young people from low income families have been excluded from new opportunities. For many of them adulthood with its destination of a stable job and a home, marriage and children seems out of reach. The train has left the station.

A new approach

New Labour in government embraced the car journey. In this newly mobile society, equality would be achieved through education and access to technology and skills. New Labour championed a meritocracy that would create social mobility for the most talented.

To stem growing levels of inequality Labour spent £134bn on tax credits in the period 1999–2008/9. They were a vital lifeline to families on low pay and succeeded in reducing poverty, but they were expensive. They

compensated for, rather than changed, an economy that kept generating inequality.

In 2010 Labour passed its Child Poverty Act, which set government targets for reducing both relative and absolute levels of child poverty. But by then Labour's strategy to reduce inequality was stalling. Concentrating on income targets tended to encourage short-term policies that increased benefit and tax credits for families, at the expense of longer-term solutions.

In July 2015, Iain Duncan Smith, then work and pensions secretary, scrapped the child poverty targets. The Conservative government adopted New Labour's social mobility agenda but with no commitment to greater equality. It is the worst of all worlds. With Britain's very high levels of inequality, class still largely defines life chances. A meritocracy that promotes the successful does not create greater equality, it simply legitimises the advantages of the rich and encourages contempt for the poor.

Social mobility is the journey between where you came from and your destination. How easy or hard the journey is depends upon two factors. The first is the labour market and the distribution of income – how many jobs there are in the middle and at the top end. The second is the institutions that enable individuals to make the journey. Social mobility does not create greater equality on its own. It is greater equality that improves social mobility. The approaches of both David Cameron and New Labour have shared a similar failing. Both ignored the economy that was generating increasing inequalities of income, power and opportunity not only between classes but between generations.

Tax and income transfers are not enough to resolve these structural problems. Education alone cannot deliver a fairer society. The economy has to be reengineered to produce a fairer distribution of opportunity and reward. To address this, the left must combine social renewal with

radical economic reform, and this will require transforming how we do politics.

What matters most to people is their family, their work and wages, and the place they live. Parents strive to give their children security, love and a sense of belonging. And yet the Labour party has stopped talking about these everyday issues. We have lost touch with people's lives and have suffered two devastating election defeats. Our party needs a root and branch rethink about who we are, our politics, and what we must do to meet the challenges of the future.

Labour has settled into a way of doing politics that reinforces our disconnection from voters. This is true of how we think about policy. Policy is about setting an approach, but we have reduced it to technical fixes and retail offers to the electorate. We identify problems to be solved and then we separate them out from the complex whole they belong to.

We focus on individuals but not on their relationships. We talk about child poverty as if family in all its different shapes and sizes is not the front and centre of children's lives. Too frequently we end up trying to tackle the symptom rather than deal with the cause. But instead we need to pioneer new approaches to policy making and focus on the institutions that govern our society and economy.

Institutions shape social order. They evolve in society to govern people's behaviour. They can be organisations of government and the economy, for example the Treasury or the public limited company. And they can be important social customs such as the family. The shift of our economy and society from industrial to post-industrial has left many of our institutions depleted, or redundant. In the decade ahead the challenge for the left is to identify those that are not working and renew them.

These institutions can be grouped into three separate phases of growing up: first, the antenatal and early years

of family. Second, adolescence and the development of a sense of belonging and identity, and third the transition into work.

Family

What matters most to children's wellbeing is the emotional life of their family. Early relationships matter as much as money. Poor relationships in childhood lead to poorer employment outcomes, difficulties in making relationships, poorer physical health and mental health, and higher levels of smoking, substance abuse and overeating. Promoting the bonds between parents and children in their early years not only leads to happier and more prosperous lives, it saves considerable future spending on the costs of family failure. Tessa Jowell's Sure Start was an early example with its focus on mothers and babies.

Government spends far too much money dealing with the symptoms of problems. Labour's priority should be to shift spending to invest in preventing the causes of social problems. By shifting resources to targeted early years intervention, in the way pioneered by Labour MP Graham Allen and Jon Collins of Nottingham City Council, we can tackle the root causes of social and emotional problems among children and young people.

Every baby should receive the care it needs. The cross party manifesto, *1001 Critical Days*, sets out a policy framework for the period of conception to age two. Services and children's centres need to be coordinated in a whole family approach, working with all members of a family involved in the care, education and health of the children. Louise Casey's troubled families programme has been pioneering this approach. Free parenting classes should be available, addressing the pre-natal period and extending to the impact of parenting on the relationship of parents and their relationships with their children.

A whole family approach develops mutual support amongst family members, and so less dependence on services provided by the state. Alongside strengthening family life we need to provide affordable, high quality childcare, which is guaranteed for all parents of pre-school children from age one. And we need to give fathers the chance to be more involved in early parenting, allowing them time off for antenatal appointments and a four week paternity leave paid at least at the minimum wage.

We should look again at child trust funds. They provided all children with a start on their journey into adulthood. The coalition government scrapped them in 2010, but evidence showed they encouraged even poorer families to save for their children. Lastly we have to look at the way time is distributed unequally between men and women and across classes. It is a precious commodity and it is in short supply for young parents, particularly women, just when they need it the most. We must improve opportunities for flexible working and the balance between work and home. We must tackle low pay which forces parents to work all hours to make ends meet. A proper living wage allows mothers and fathers to spend more time with their children.

Belonging

Adolescence is a time of change and uncertainty. Creating a sense of identity and belonging are a vital part of growing up. There is the excitement of new horizons. Discovery, curiosity, making relationships and testing one's self are experiences leading toward greater independence. But alongside these there are also feelings of loss at the passing of childhood. Early attachments are revived, and those who suffered adverse circumstances as children are often the least able to manage adolescence. They are vulnerable to anxiety, depression or self harm.

One million children suffer a mental illness, and many receive no treatment. It is a scandal. Luciana Berger, shadow mental health minister, describes children and adolescent mental health services as a "Cinderella service within a Cinderella service". Treatment for mental illness should be as available as it is for physical illness. Approved psychological therapies need to be available in schools to all who need them.

Adolescents need challenges to test themselves, and helpful guidance in defining their identity. Both character building and identity making are connected to the larger task of improving the integration of society. We are becoming a deeply divided society along both class and ethnic lines. Relationships and social networks are essential for social mobility and yet we have one of the most segregated schools systems in the rich world.

We need to identify and develop institutions of social solidarity to bring people together to work for the common good. We need action to break down social segregation in both housing and schooling. We should introduce character education to help build young people's resilience, their wellbeing, and their readiness to take opportunities.

The National Citizen Service could expand so that all 16 and 17 years olds get the opportunity to take part in a two month programme following GCSEs. These can include young people seeking British citizenship.

Work

In the last decade, the transition into work has become more uncertain as more jobs have become low paid, insecure and casualised. Unemployment rates among 18–24 year olds are still over 13 per cent. Increasing numbers of graduates from the new universities struggle to find work in traditional graduate occupations. Young people not attending university have been left to fend for them-

selves in a jobs market where middle income jobs are disappearing.

IPPR's report *The Condition of Britain* sets out a distinct work, training and benefits pathway for young people. Its aim is to ensure they complete their basic education and gain work experience. Labour's 2015 manifesto called for a high quality vocational route from school through to employment, a guaranteed apprenticeship for all school leavers with the right grades, and a new, independent system of careers advice. Labour should now support extending the national living wage to workers under 25. And with less than 5 per cent of under 24 year olds, and around 16 per cent of 25–34 years, belonging to a trade union, more needs to be done to promote the benefits of trade union membership.

These proposals would create a framework of institutions to support young people's journey into adulthood. But we also need to support those who wander off track and end up in young offender institutions. In recent years the numbers have fallen dramatically but a small group remains and 67 per cent reoffend within 12 months of release. A recent report on the youth justice system for Michael Gove, the justice secretary, calls for the abolition of young offender institutions. It recommends their replacement with smaller local 'secure schools' and an ethos of tough love and learning.

In the decade ahead we will need a strong and stable society to provide security in a tempestuous and fast changing economy. By reforming our economy and rebuilding our institutions of social solidarity, we can distribute power, wealth, and opportunity more fairly across both classes and generations.

Labour's covenant

Society is a covenant. It only thrives when its institutions are strong and its traditions are successfully handed on

from one generation to the next. Young people growing up must feel they can take their rightful place as free and equal citizens. This covenant is now under stress. The young are taking the burden of economic insecurity and inequality, and the institutions that once guided them into adulthood are no longer effective.

Labour needs a new approach to politics that is about institution building for the longer term. In the decade ahead as new technologies transform work and productivity there will be an opportunity for a great age of reform. Labour must become a credible and effective organisation capable of renewing and reforming the institutions that govern our economic and social life. It is not just the well-being of society at stake, but the future of Labour.

EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE: YOUNG PEOPLE

At the heart of growing up lies the education system. The education ideas of the last decade have resembled Michael Young's dystopian vision in *The Rise of the Meritocracy*. This is a world in which learning is an individualised matter; the educational system has no role in addressing social inequalities. But in fact, the future of education will be highly dependent on its capacity to address social issues, both at school and in higher education.

When Sweden, formerly regarded as exemplifying an egalitarian educational system, tried to move towards a new voucher system to enhance competition, student performance dramatically declined. Yet as technology continues to advance, our European education systems will eventually need to decisively answer the recurrent question: what's the point of public education if Google can tell us everything (thus making learning a solely private endeavour)? Critical autonomy – the reflexive capacity to be critical of our own culture – can be central even if students engage in individualised digital learning. And as social inequalities are rising across the continent, compulsory public education could play a crucial role in creating a level playing field.

A key puzzle will be how our higher education systems challenge or reinforce inequalities. University has become increasingly popular across social classes, but brings high costs for young people and their families. Due to the pressures of gaining skills to compete in the labour market, higher education participation rates are likely to stay high. Without an increase in public investment, social inequalities will continue to be reproduced. The mismatch between labour market realities and higher education aspirations is likely to create generations of European graduates severely in debt and facing underemployment and unemployment.

Lorenza Antonucci

4 | MIGRATION: A SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC RESPONSE

Harvey Redgrave

With high levels of inward migration likely to continue for the foreseeable future, regaining trust on immigration is a crucial task for the left. Not only for electoral reasons but because ever-rising immigration brings real challenges – around social integration, solidarity and fairness – that should matter to social democrats. While the left has struggled with the issue, the basis for a new position on immigration is clear: 'pro-migration, but less of it, with greater emphasis on social integration'.

Increased migration has been a defining trend of the past decade, changing both the economic structure and social fabric of our country. It has also been one which the left in general, and the Labour party in particular, has struggled to articulate a response to.

For many years, the standard response of social democrats has been to argue that public concern about immigration is not actually about immigration at all, but is simply a function of a broader sense of economic insecurity. According to this view, immigration just happens to be the most visible symptom of that insecurity: that the things people are *really* worried about relate to the way our economy works – low pay, poor quality jobs, lack of housing and so on. Fix those problems and concern about immigration would wither away.

But the last decade has taught us that this is wishful thinking. For one thing, it doesn't make sense to separate the economic model we have from the system of mass migration that currently exists: they are inextricably linked. Moreover, concern about migration is about more than just economic insecurity (though that remains important). It speaks to a less tangible, but nonetheless real, fear that the communities in which we live will no longer be 'ours'; a sense that the pace of change is too fast and that our 'way of life' is somehow under threat.

With today's high levels of inward migration likely to continue for the foreseeable future, regaining trust on immigration is a crucial task for the left. Not only for electoral reasons but because ever-rising immigration brings real challenges – around social integration, solidarity and fairness – that should matter to social democrats. So how have we got to where we are? And what would a principled and politically viable approach to immigration in the UK look like?

A defining trend of our time

It is sometimes suggested that immigration (and public concern about it) is neither new, nor unique.[1] Of course it is true that immigration did not start with New Labour: it dates back hundreds of years, from the arrival of the Huguenots in the 17th century right up to the great post-war migrations of former Commonwealth subjects. At the time, people worried about the impact these new migrants would have on Britain (just as they do today), but over several generations, we have come to accept them as part of our shared national story.

1 When asked about whether current levels of migration were 'sustainable' in a '5live' hustings in September 2015, the current Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn said 'there is net immigration at the moment; in some years there is net migration outwards'

Historical perspective is important, but the idea that there is nothing special about current levels of immigration is not supported by the weight of evidence. For a start, immigration numbers during the last decade are, by any standard, extraordinary. Net migration is currently above 300,000, with gross inward migration pushing 620,000 a year: the highest ever recorded. Between 1993 and 2014, the number of foreign born people more than doubled from 3.8 million to around 8.3 million. During the same period, the number of foreign citizens living in the UK increased from nearly 2 million to more than 5 million.

At the same time, the migrant population within the UK has become more diverse and more dispersed. 20 years ago, immigration originated mainly from the countries of the Commonwealth and was concentrated in London, the south east and urban centres in the midlands and the north. Since the mid-2000s, the various waves of economic migration resulting from EU expansion have seen large numbers of people arrive from eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Conflict and instability in Africa and the Middle East have also led to growing numbers coming here to claim asylum (and family reunion) from Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria.

Many places in Britain previously virtually untouched by immigration, including rural counties and market towns, now host significant migrant communities. Towns like Boston in Lincolnshire, have gone from being over 95 per cent white British, to having the highest proportion of east European residents of any town in Britain, over the course of a decade. In addition to London, Birmingham, Manchester, Cardiff and Glasgow have undergone huge demographic change, becoming super-diverse global cities.

Winners and losers

The impact of these changes is contested, requiring a clear eyed assessment of what the evidence tells us. So let's start with what we know. Most meta-studies of the evidence suggest that the net economic impact of recent immigration has been marginally positive overall (if measured in terms of GDP[2]), but that those benefits have not been evenly distributed. The main winners have been migrants themselves and the top 10 per cent of earners. The main losers have tended to be people with low skills, working in the lowest paid sectors, some of whom have seen their wages squeezed.

The economic impact of immigration is not only felt in terms of wages, it is likely to be structural too, since it encourages firms to pursue business models based on the creation of short-term, low value jobs, rather than investing for the long-term. Historically, these effects have been most evident in the lowest paid sectors of the UK economy, such as social care, hospitality and food processing, where the ready supply of cheap migrant labour, combined with flexible labour standards, has contributed to a deterioration in workers' terms and conditions and, in some cases, outright exploitation. More recently though, there is evidence of similar effects in higher skilled sectors, such as tech, where the number of foreign workers recruited via 'intra-company transfers' (a faster, less bureaucratic route for richer firms to hire workers from outside the EU) has risen at the same time as government figures show the

2 The government's advisory body, the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) concluded in 2012 that GDP was no longer a useful measure of migration's impact, since the most likely beneficiaries of migration were likely to be migrants themselves. The MAC concluded a better measure of migration's impact would be the living standards of people already here.

number of apprenticeships being offered to young people has fallen off a cliff.

Another major source of public angst has been migrants' ability to access benefits. Here the evidence is pretty clear-cut: the vast majority of migrants come to the UK to work. There is very little evidence migrants are lured to Britain by the generosity of our benefits system, whether in relation to in-work or out of work benefits. And once here, migrants are less likely to claim out of work benefits than native workers (though we know from attitudinal data that it is the fact such claims are allowed to happen at all, rather than the volume of claims that irritates the public).

These are all things we can be fairly certain about because we have the empirical data to back them up. There are other effects that are harder to quantify, such as the impact of migration on local infrastructure and public services, where data is harder to come by. What we do know is that settlement patterns are not uniform – migrants tend to cluster in areas where other migrants are already settled – thus meaning that particular communities are likely to bear a disproportionate burden of the pressure on scarce resources.

Similarly, it is too early to say what the impact of the current wave of migration will be on levels of social integration. Within a UK context, we know that many ethnic groups, for example, Jews, Indians, Chinese, Black Caribbean, have integrated relatively successfully, as measured by educational attainment, occupation, rates of inter-marriage. Others, such as Pakistani and Somali groups, have been disproportionately more likely to be marginalised economically and geographically segregated. But we do not yet know what the social and cultural impact of current migration, including from within the EU, will be on the Britain of tomorrow.

All part of the plan?

Lurking at the more hysterical fringes of the migration debate are those who claim that this huge social change was the result of a conspiracy by the last Labour government to alter the demographic map of Britain to its own electoral advantage or to deliberately hold down wages in order to sustain the economic boom. But if anything, the opposite is true. If we look back at the last 10 to 20 years we find that, far from having a grand plan to transform the country, there was often no plan at all. In which case, how did we end up where we are today?

Partly the explanation is structural: New Labour came to power in the middle of an immigration hurricane, caused by the acceleration of globalisation in the 1990s and 2000s. In particular, the dramatically lowered cost of travel, which brought the countries of western Europe within easy reach for hundreds of millions of people; and a booming economy, which meant there were plenty of jobs for the migrants who could get here. In these conditions, immigration would almost certainly have increased, whatever the government's intentions.

Alongside this though, the last Labour government made some deliberate policy decisions which helped accelerate such changes. These included the liberalisation of non-EU work permits and the opening up of our labour market to the new EU states of eastern and central Europe in 2004 – seven years before most other EU countries.

These decisions were underpinned by a deep-rooted assumption on the left: that immigration was an unalloyed 'good', with negligible risks or downsides. This had its basis in a powerful fusion of two strands of thought within the Labour movement: the anti-racism struggles of the 1970s and 80s, which resulted in a blurring of the lines between the politics of immigration and race; and the commitment to economic liberalism and internationalism

amongst those at the top of the Labour party, for whom a more permissive approach to immigration symbolised confidence and modernisation.

There was thus little serious discussion at the time about the pros and cons of opening up UK labour markets to a greatly expanded pool of cheap, low skilled labour and certainly no democratic mandate to do it. To compound matters, when the numbers arriving from central and eastern Europe hugely exceeded initial expectations (initial modelling had suggested numbers in the region of 20,000) and public concern began to grow, the response of Labour politicians sounded at best tin eared, at worst dismissive. The Gillian Duffy incident in 2010 was so damaging precisely because it revealed a 'truth' that people believed: that Labour politicians privately believed voter anxiety about immigration was a form of soft bigotry.

It would be wrong to pretend that these problems have been confined to the left. The Conservatives face an equally sizable credibility gap when it comes to immigration. David Cameron's 2010 pledge to bring net migration down to the tens of thousands – has proved a spectacular hostage to fortune, with net migration now higher than when the Conservatives walked into office. However, for Conservatives, the problem stems from scepticism about their ability to achieve what they promise. Highly damaging for sure, but of a different order to Labour, whose very motivations are mistrusted by the electorate.

A job half done

Between 2010 and 2015, Labour, under the leadership of Ed Miliband, attempted to directly address its migration credibility problem in two ways. First, a conscious decision was made to talk about immigration more: to admit past mistakes, to acknowledge people's fears and try to build

a long overdue mainstream position around the notion of managed migration.

Second, Labour formulated policies which sought to directly address people's anxieties, whilst being rooted in social democratic values. This included a series of pledges focused on stronger regulation of labour markets – as a way to drive out the forced exploitation which undercuts the wages and conditions of British workers.

Throughout the period, Miliband was conscious of the need to craft a position that spoke to the more socially conservative voters he knew he needed to woo in order to win power (generally hostile to immigration), without alienating his liberal metropolitan base (overwhelmingly pro-immigration). Every policy had to be carefully calibrated, which sometimes meant the final presentation of the position was so heavily caveated and nuanced that the public were left confused. Of course this is a balancing act that is familiar to social democratic parties across Europe, from the Netherlands to Spain, where the left has struggled to reconcile competing priorities on immigration. But it arguably also highlighted a wider problem with Labour's approach to such problems. Too often, the solution to political challenges was sought almost exclusively through policy, rather than finding ways to tell a broader story about the country.

Miliband was also keen to avoid the same mistake David Cameron had made as leader of the Conservative opposition: of making a promise he wasn't going to be able to keep. That all but ruled up being able to set a target for reducing immigration, or being able to radically reform the rules surrounding EU free movement, however tempting. As a result, Labour went into the 2015 election lacking a 'big bold offer' on immigration and instead had to settle for a series of more modest, practical pledges.

Yet even leaving aside these electoral challenges, the repositioning on immigration undertaken during the last

parliament was a job only half done. Addressing the economic dimension of anxiety about immigration was not enough – Labour could and should have said more about the cultural dimension to people's anxiety; those aspects that relate to who 'we' are and how we live together. There were any number of potential talking points, from the nearly one million people who struggle to speak English to the increasing social segregation of our schools, where Labour could have talked about the need for change and the importance of building a shared future together, without pandering to people's fears. But the territory was left largely vacated.

Talking about 'integration' has traditionally been challenging territory for the left, partly because of a general tendency toward economic reductionism and partly because of a concern (unsupported by the data) that doing so would upset ethnic minorities. But when the left refuses to engage in so-called 'identity' issues, it leaves a vacuum for exploitation by those who prefer to sow fear and division, as Nigel Farage did to such startling effect during the run up to the 2015 election.

Looking to the future

The basis for a new mainstream social democratic position on immigration is actually pretty clear. In broad terms it could be summarised as 'pro-migration, but less of it, with rights and responsibilities more clearly enforced'.

The central elements would be three-fold.

First, a clear and unambiguous aspiration to bring down immigration, particularly low skilled immigration, from current levels. Setting a target would be dishonest and self-defeating, since around half of inward migration comes from within the European Union and nobody can predict with any certainty what convulsions in the eurozone will do to migration flows over the next five

to 10 years. But there is nothing dishonest about setting an overall direction for the country, even if there are no obvious Whitehall levers available to pull (at least for the time being). Of course, many of Labour's most popular immigration policies – clamping down on rogue recruitment agencies, enforcing the minimum wage, tackling unregulated housing – were designed to do exactly this (though the aim of lower immigration was rarely made explicit). A clearer stance on overall numbers would also create the political space for Labour to make the moral case for Britain taking in more refugees. Unless the public believes Labour is serious about reducing immigration, it will become increasingly difficult to separate out questions of asylum and questions of economic migration.

Second, radical reform of the UK labour market to make it less migrant-dependent. This goes with the grain of Labour's policies over the last five years, but would necessarily extend into new areas, such as the way people are hired and trained. In sectors such as construction, for example, which seem to suffer from persistent skill shortages, a cultural shift is required to refocus the workforce away from a dependence on cheap foreign labour, towards the training and hiring of local workers. The Labour party should put itself at the forefront of efforts to drive change. Similarly, the left can afford to adopt a less passive posture to reform of the EU; free movement is a system worth defending, but the quid pro quo should be tougher rules to ensure labour standards are properly enforced.

Third, and perhaps most important, embracing a positive social integration agenda. The left should not be frightened to argue that new migrants need to knit more closely with the communities in which they settle, and that while migrant rights are important, these need to fit alongside a clear set of obligations and responsibilities. A good start would be how we communicate. According to the last census, there are 863,000 people living in Britain

who speak little or no English, the majority of whom are economically inactive or work in low paid jobs. That is bad for those migrants' life chances, bad for the communities in which they live and bad for our country. How can we share a life together if we can't even have a conversation? If David Cameron wants to reverse his earlier decision to cut funding for English classes, good. But let's go further and commit to ensuring that within 10 years, nobody will be left unable to speak the language, without an opportunity to learn it.

Across all three areas, achieving credibility will involve not just new policy ideas but the development of a more convincing narrative and language of change. Rather than giving speeches referring to other people's concerns about immigration and how politics must do more to address 'them', social democrats need to talk more about 'us' and what 'we' can do to solve problems together. They must articulate a clear vision for the future; in which the UK retains its historic openness to the world, including providing a safe haven for those fleeing persecution, whilst recognising that our capacity to absorb new immigration cannot be limitless and that with higher migration, we are going to have to invest more in the collective bonds that tie us together.

Doing so is essential, not only in order to chart a route back to power, but because it is important for the future of social democratic politics, which depend on principles of collectivism and social solidarity. The prize is great if we have the will to see it through.

EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE: MIGRATION

The EU refugee, asylum and migration crisis has left political leaders floundering in a dangerous quicksand. As they undertake desperate and directionless efforts to regain firm ground, it is not just the future of asylum and migration policy that is at stake, but the EU itself.

To ensure its survival, the EU must quickly regain its ability to manage and shape asylum and migration flows to and inside Europe. This includes increasing the absorptive capacities of local communities in times of crisis, accompanied by the promotion of universal and European values against demagogy, racism and xenophobia. At the EU level, the Dublin system (that the EU member state of first arrival is responsible) is broken. A quota system based on solidarity and burden sharing needs to be operationalised and agreed upon as a basis for a future EU common asylum and migration policy. At an international level, the EU must reorient incentives so that refugees stay in places where they are safe from persecution. This requires a major effort by the EU and its member states to define and deploy a tailor-made set of initiatives and instruments, which can only succeed by enhancing the governance and effectiveness of the Common Foreign Security Policy.

Solidarity and burden sharing must be consistently promoted as the foundation of a future European asylum and migration policy which can provide a realistic perspective to prevent the EU from collapsing. However, in light of the realities of neighborhood conflicts and globalisation, chances for successful reform have diminished considerably recently. As member states cannot agree on the way ahead, systemic failure has become a real possibility. Therefore, it is high time to build a coalition of the willing that is on the one hand ready to do the necessary to defuse the acute crisis and, on the other, can strengthen the nucleus of the EU by engaging in fundamental multi-sectoral reform that matches up to the real challenges that lie ahead.

Sönke Schmidt

5 | FULLY COMMITTED?

Clare McNeil

As family life changes, it will be increasingly hard for those on the left to maintain a commitment to social justice while being indifferent to the quality and structure of families. The left should not be ashamed to stress the value of committed relationships and two parent families, while balancing this with showing respect and support for those who are not in those arrangements. This is not an obstacle to achieving objectives such as greater income or gender equality; on the contrary it is a necessary part of achieving them.

The past few decades have seen huge changes in our personal relationships and family lives. Gay marriage and civil partnerships have re-defined this institution for today's society. People are increasingly having children before getting married, or are not getting married at all; and fathers are playing a more active role in their children's lives than ever before.

But one thing that hasn't changed is the left's discomfort when it comes to expressing its 'family values'. In government, Labour introduced groundbreaking reforms on family friendly rights in the workplace, expanded maternity leave provision and established Sure Start centres around the country to invest in children's early years. Yet both in and out of power it has often remained silent or ambivalent on issues like relationship quality and

commitment, allowing the right to colonise this important political terrain.

This leaves the left less able to speak to the things that mean most to us in our lives: the love we share with others and the family relationships that sustain us. It is also problematic because evidence is increasingly showing the value of committed relationships and connectedness for all areas of our lives. The left has typically approached the family through the parent-child relationship, but evidence suggests it is the quality of the couple relationship which is the single most important factor in a child's upbringing.

The left needs to abandon its reluctance to addressing issues like relationship quality and commitment. Instead it should not be ashamed to stress the value of committed relationships and two parent families, while balancing this with showing respect and support for those who are not in those arrangements. This is not an obstacle to achieving social justice objectives such as greater income equality and gender equality; on the contrary it is a necessary part of achieving these.

Family and relationships at the last election

Several commentators have pointed to the difficulty Labour had at the last election in reconciling its economic and social agendas. The egalitarian pursuit of equality and distributive justice can unintentionally reduce the role of families to little more than unwitting economic units. When combined with a liberal preference for freedom of choice in personal relationships, this can result in a lack of clarity on goals for family policy and equivocal rhetoric.

If we look back to the last general election campaign, Labour's manifesto contained strong commitments on areas of family policy such as childcare and paternity leave. However, the power of relationships and the family to be a force for good in people's lives rarely made it into key speeches.

Conservative manifesto commitments on family policy were more modest in comparison. But the party was successfully able to mix its rhetoric on economic security and fiscal rectitude with a faith in marriage and loving relationships. David Cameron has been unapologetic and unambiguous in his views on the importance of commitment and has defended the family as the institution "where true power lies".

Evolving research and public attitudes

If this can make for good political positioning, the concern for the quality of relationships (if not the reverence for marriage per se) is also in line with what the evidence suggests. Research points to the primacy of relationship quality for a range of social goods, including child development. Relate have found that children who grow up with parents who have good quality relationships and low parental conflict (whether they are together or not) enjoy better physical and mental health, better emotional wellbeing and achieve higher academic attainment. Children with an "intact, two-parent family with both biological parents" do better on a wide range of outcomes than those who grow up in a single parent family (although many, if not most, children who grow up in a single-parent family also do well).[1]

Beyond family life, well-functioning relationships are also important for mental health, protecting against depression and improving engagement at work. They also have a direct impact on mortality: research by Relate has shown that those with stronger social relationships are 50 per cent more likely to survive life-threatening conditions than those whose relationships are weaker.

1 McLanahan S, Donahue E and Haskins R (2005) 'Introducing the issue', in 'Marriage and well-being', The Future of Children 15 (2). Washington DC: Brookings Institute

Valuing committed relationships is also in tune with public attitudes. The British Social Attitudes survey shows that, while younger generations are less likely to disagree with couples having children outside of marriage than older generations, they still overwhelmingly aspire to being in committed relationships and to having a family. And while cohabitation rates have increased considerably (almost doubling in the UK between 1996 and 2012), many young people still aspire to get married. For example, in the US around 70 per cent of 'millennials' say they want to get married, according to Pew social trends data.

Dodging the issue

The left needs to be clear in its objectives and straightforward in its language if it is to build a political project around secure relationships and families. But a fear of moralising and unresolved tensions between competing policy objectives has often prevented this.

For example, it is not clear where the left stands on issues such as how (or even whether) to recognise certain forms of family arrangement in the tax and benefits system. The Conservative party has been clear about its opposition to the 'couple penalties' it claims are to be found in the tax and benefits system. It has addressed this issue by introducing the £600 million marriage tax allowance. It has also designed its new Universal Credit benefit system so that it will be claimed and owned by couples jointly, usually paid in full to one partner. It also rewards part-time work so that parents are not discouraged from staying at home when they have children.

If Labour were only committed to a policy of promoting family work life balance, it could be expected to support any policy that enables one parent to stay at home with their children – if they choose to do so. However, it holds this objective in tension with two others: poverty

reduction and gender equality. In order to reduce in-work poverty, work incentives need to be as strong as possible for so-called 'second earners' to encourage both parents into work. This, combined with a desire to support women (who tend on the whole to be the second earners) back into work after having children, means many on the left tend to favour a dual earner household model.

Because it is unwilling to openly acknowledge the trade-offs between these competing objectives, the voice of the left is muted in this debate. As a result, the UK is moving towards a default position of rewarding a 1.5 earner model of family working arrangement through Universal Credit, and the left has little to say about it.

Labour has been careful to pledge support for families, whatever their structure. A concern for the welfare of single parent families has rightly been a focus for Labour ever since the victimisation of lone parents in the 80s and 90's as part of the Conservatives' attack on the welfare system. However, this concern, and a reluctance to appear judgmental, have prevented it from being unambiguous in stating what the evidence suggests: that those children brought up in a home with two loving parents do better in life.

This reluctance can prevent Labour from being wholehearted in focusing on what family breakdown means as a barrier to children succeeding. Labour significantly increased investment support for parents and families while in government, but despite an interest in strengthening relationships in the early years of the Blair government, couple relationships became less of a focus over time, with investment in relationship support declining after 2003.

It also exposes a contradiction at the heart of Labour's approach to parental leave. At the last election, Labour proposed a month of 'use it or lose it' parental leave for fathers. However, it has not been willing to move to a policy on parental leave that equally shares parental leave

between the mother and father, preferring instead for mothers to retain the entitlement to maternity provision, and to have the option to share this with their partner.

In other countries such as Denmark and Germany, parental leave is equally shared between both parents, an arrangement which has secured more up-take from fathers and clearly sets expectations of involvement from two committed parents from the very start of a child's life. If supporting two parent relationships was a clear goal for Labour policy, it could be expected to sign up to this alternative policy position. However, up to now it has not had an honest debate about why it prefers to retain the current arrangements, which evidence suggests are less likely to result in shared parenting and greater equality in relationships.

These are areas a future left agenda on the family might choose to focus on, but unless these tensions are exposed and the trade-offs negotiated, the Labour party will lack a coherent and intellectually confident basis for this.

What role for government?

Many will ask what difference government can really make when it comes to our intimate personal relationships. The state does not have the best answers, and in any case people will naturally turn to their family and social networks for expertise and advice. However, government can for example improve access to support for parenting and relationship counselling when people are facing difficulties, and this has been shown to help improve the quality of family life.

Government can also help create the conditions that will improve equality within relationships – a vital factor for improving relationship quality – through, for example, investment in childcare or promoting flexible working. Of course, the most important conditions for strong

families and relationships are having a stable income, decent housing and good health – all of which government can influence.

Making a commitment to valuing two parent families might be interpreted as exclusive and hostile towards those not in this arrangement. However, a concern for the diversity of people's lives and experiences does not have to come at the cost of speaking to the many. These can be two parents of the same sex; 'blended families' or 'co-parents' living apart. The same thing holds true: that the functioning of their relationship is of prime importance to their children.

A complicated history

Part of the left's difficulty in finding the right language to articulate its hopes and fears for the family lies in the many contrasting forces that have shaped it. The New Left of the 1960s was at the forefront of challenging the cultural norms of marriage and the nuclear family. Since then the left has prized personal freedom and choice over convention, and being pro-family on the left risks being seen as being against equality, gender equality or minority groups. Ambivalence can also be traced back to feminist movements which were highly influential on the left in the last century and challenged marriage as being a site of oppression for women, and family life as reproducing inequalities between men and women. Both movements left deep imprints on the modern left and its attitudes to the family.

Of more recent influences, Jon Cruddas has argued that Labour's embrace of economic liberalism in the last few decades had a tendency to "drop people out of the equation", relegating concerns for personal relationships and wellbeing altogether. Others have argued that for egalitarians, the family is a contested institution: a means for

improving chances in life on the one hand and for reproducing inequalities on the other. Blue Labour thinking that has emerged in recent years sought to restore Labour's lost tradition of 'fraternity' alongside 'liberty and equality'. In so doing. Maurice Glasman argued that Labour should have concern for the "the family as a unit – stable relationships, good parenting and care for the elderly".

These last insights struggled to take hold and it is unclear what influence they will have on the Labour party in the coming years. But there is nothing inherently socially conservative about being interested in supporting committed relationships and ensuring both parents can have a role in their child's early years. The Labour party may need to reconcile what Jon Cruddas called its "exiled traditions" with its present if it is to move towards a modern agenda for the family.

Conclusion

As family life changes, it will be increasingly hard for those on the left to maintain a commitment to social justice while being indifferent to the quality and structure of families. For example, what does the left have to say to the growing number of cohabiting couples who may increasingly want new or different ways of expressing a public commitment other than marriage and securing the rights this confers? What about the risk of a plateauing in progress achieved over the last few decades on gender equality unless couple relationships change to enable greater sharing of work and care within households? And what of the family 'care gap' that is opening up from 2017 as the number of older people in need of care outstrips the number of adult children able to provide it, and the implications this will have for the most disadvantaged families?

The left is more likely to be able to respond to these challenges if it is explicit about its goals and open about

its values. In order to do so it needs to let go of its ambivalence towards talking about the family as a unit, and be unashamed in arguing for the merits of supportive, committed relationships.

EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE: FAMILY

As Britain debates its future in Europe, many pro-Europeans argue that the EU has done a tremendous amount to reduce inequalities within families and also between them. One frequently cited example is the current EU legislation on maternity and parental leave. It is indeed crucial that binding legislation exists on the minimum requirements on maternity leave and protection of pregnant women at work. However, in the current context of changing forms of family life as well as the transformation of the character of work, this legislation is outdated and inadequate. It may be a reasonable pro-European argument, but it is definitely not an inspiring one.

The European Commission has promised a fresh approach. Its new 'roadmap' could have been the starting point, but instead continued with a very traditional approach towards families, failing to address the concerns of different family structures or offer them a supportive social policy.

Current surveys show that low-income families are more likely to vote 'leave' in the EU referendum; this should not be a surprise. The (far) right offers an alternative, exclusionary way of doing politics as a solution to the crises we face. Against this background, reclaiming more national sovereignty and return to the traditional, nuclear family are both symptoms of the dissatisfaction with neoliberal democracies.

The task for the left is to go beyond this narrow interpretation of family and equality policy. A more comprehensive approach would strive for a stable family life for everyone by including issues of financial, material and emotional care; quality, availability and affordability of care; and family health. Indeed, revaluing and investing in quality care is the cornerstone of a progressive alternative. As the quality of family life affects educational and professional performance, stable and caring family ties are as important for the left's predistribution agenda as economic reforms.

Judit Tanczos

6 | BUILDING A NEW HOUSING MODEL

Kate Henderson

There is a positive opportunity to create fantastic new and refurbished homes which meet people's needs, irrespective of their earnings, and create a safe environment that helps promote people's long-term health and happiness. However, in order to achieve this we urgently need a radically different house building model which creates diverse housing tenure options, delivered by a range of providers. Alongside the private sector this would involve a much stronger role for the public sector and greater emphasis on smaller, citizen-led models.

The facts of the housing crisis are as stark as the human misery it engenders; the number of young couples, families and individuals unable to get a home, let alone take a first step on the housing ladder, tells its own story of shattered dreams and broken relationships.

For those on low pay, where either affordable or social housing is a tenure of necessity, the choice is often non-existent. As a nation, we are simply not providing for essential low-paid workers – whose employment underpins an economy on which we all depend – or for people on average incomes trying to get onto the housing ladder.

The latest household projections for England, published in November 2015, suggest that we need over 220,000 additional homes each year until 2031 if the projected growth in households is to be accommodated. Only 54 per cent of

the homes required have been built since 2011. To catch up by 2020 with the number of homes suggested by the projections, we need to build over 310,000 homes a year over the next five years.

While the housing crisis touches every part of Britain and is a pressing issue for every community, the greatest need for housing is in London and the wider south-east where 55 per cent of the homes required in England need to be located. In other parts of the country, including some of our former industrial towns and cities in the north and midlands, the challenge is the quality and refurbishment needs of the existing social housing stock.

The figures also reveal that young people across the country are struggling more than ever to live independently. Housing shortages and the resultant high prices and rents mean that young people are living with parents or in house shares for longer, rather than forming a household of their own. Rising student debt levels and potential future welfare reform are likely to make their position even more difficult. Even if the homes required are actually built, the latest household projections suggest that couples aged between 25 and 34 will be less able to live in their own home in 2031 than their counterparts in 2011.

These figures are not politically derived or made up by house builders. And all forecast figures are just that – forecasts – and do not give a perfect view of the future. However, in Britain today there is no credible argument that we should not be building more homes, not just to meet new household formation, but also to provide decent homes for people currently living in overcrowded and poor conditions.

Improved planning and better housing have long been identified as essential for improving the health of communities, reducing health inequalities and cutting costs for the taxpayer. Conversely, poor quality housing and an inadequate supply of new homes impacts on the social wellbeing

of communities. The Building Research Establishment has calculated that the annual cost of poor housing to the NHS is at least £1.4bn. A lack of decent affordable housing also reduces labour mobility and undermines the ability of our towns and cities to attract new business.

The quality of our homes matters as much as the quantity. It cannot be right that new homes being built in England today are the smallest in western Europe and many are unsuitable and inaccessible for a significant proportion of the population who are elderly or disabled. We need decent minimum space and accessibility standards applicable across all tenures. Space standards exist in London and they should be mandatory everywhere.

There is a positive opportunity to create fantastic new and refurbished homes which meet people's needs, irrespective of their earnings, and create a safe environment that helps promote people's long-term health and happiness. However, in order to achieve this we urgently need a new debate and a radically different house building model.

We need to start by changing the terms of what has become a negative debate about housing, full of contradictions. Development is so often seen as a threat. Headlines in some newspapers, driven more by emotion than by hard evidence, scream of both green belts and countryside at risk. But emphatically they need not be – provided we have a planning system that is fit for purpose.

We also need to be upfront about the dilemma we now face. New homes and communities must be accessible and inclusive and founded on the highest sustainability standards, and we know these standards are deliverable as demonstrated by communities across Europe in places like Freiburg in Germany and Malmo is Sweden. However, national planning policy and guidance in England on a range of place-making issues has been greatly reduced, and with our current developer-led model of delivery, financial viability often trumps quality and sustainability.

We can, and should do much better than this. There are alternative and proven development models that will help us achieve a much more inclusive and vibrant housing offer in England.

A new house building model

While the private sector plays an important role in building homes in England, they are incapable of delivering the number of homes we need on their own. That is why we urgently need to create a new house building model. The new model would focus on creating diverse housing tenure options, delivered by a range of providers, from new innovative and publicly accountable development corporations and local authority companies, working in partnership with housing associations; private-sector house-builders and small and medium size builders; through to smaller, citizen-led models such as co-operatives, community land trusts, self-build and custom-build.

A key foundation for a new house building model would be a much stronger role for the public sector. It seems all too easy to forget the significant contribution planning has made to improving people's quality of life since the end of the 19th century. We built extraordinary quality social housing which was an unparalleled improvement on what had come before. In the post war years, the public and private sector achieved the delivery of over 300,000 new homes per year, with around 90,000 of those homes being built by local councils. From the late 1940s to the late 1960s we built 32 new towns which still house over 2.7 million people today.

Yet since the late 1970s, figures have dramatically declined and we have seen an increasingly larger bill for housing benefit payments, whilst neglecting to address the root cause of rent increases, which is the lack of supply of social housing.

As recommended by the 2014 Lyons Housing Review, councils can and should return to a significant role in building and commissioning social housing. There are already examples of this in England, such as the Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust, but we need to go much further.

As part of a new house building model there should be a positive long-term role for new communities, combining the quality and beauty of garden cities, as found at Letchworth and Welwyn, with the practical success of the delivery of the post war new towns. We now need to be brave and match the scale of the post-war ambition by building a new generation of garden cities fit for the 21st century. This is an obvious part of the new housing model for England because garden cities represent the very best of British place-making, framed by a financial model which can pay for itself. The model is based upon the capture of the uplift in land values which the granting of planning permission and the development creates; this can be used to fund infrastructure provision, debt repayments and long-term reinvestment in the new community. This is both morally defensible – much of the value is created by public sector policy decisions – and commercially sensible – development can proceed more rapidly and successfully if it is backed up by adequate and timely infrastructure.

The development of new communities must, of course, go hand in hand with the regeneration and renewal of our existing towns and cities. London and many of our regional cities have seen a great renaissance over the last 20 years. Economic change has underpinned it, but the job is far from complete and we now need to refocus on reaching the most excluded and vulnerable in our cities. This requires a strong vision for our urban areas; we need to provide real opportunities for meaningful partnerships at the city-regional level and we need a new focus on area-based approaches to regeneration at the local level.

A new house building model should be at the heart of this new urban policy, drawing together community governance and planning with the wider integration of related health, education, policing and local authority powers and institutions. This would essentially result in a new form of area-based planning which seeks to combine planning powers and in particular place-based delivery vehicles, with a much greater sense of social outcomes and community governance. Like the garden city model this is not a new concept, but the emphasis and outcomes would be tailored to tackle specifically those areas facing complex social challenges.

Citizen-led models of housing, including co-housing and community land trusts, should be another important element of a new house building model. Citizen-led models of housing development offer both opportunities for community-based governance and stewardship arrangements and the possibility of providing a variety of tenures within a development. Self-build and custom-build homes should also be an important part of the new housing model in England, and land should be designated for this purpose, potentially as serviced plots. This isn't all about Grand Designs, opportunities offered by self-build and custom-build must be made realistic for those on moderate and low incomes.

Citizen-led housing models are not new ideas, but the scale and pace of community-led developments in England is currently relatively small and lags behind the rest of Europe. In order to accelerate the delivery of citizen-led models of development, alongside building decent social and affordable housing, suitable public sector land should be released at less than market value where this is demonstrably in the public interest. It is still possible to achieve good value for the taxpayer using this mechanism; it is simply that some of the returns to the public purse are generated through the wider economic benefits of housing delivery for the nation.

Building homes requires consensus building

To build the homes the nation needs and deserves, and to lay the foundations of a new house building model, there needs to be three fundamental changes.

Firstly, we must build consensus that housing – including housing that is available for social rent, either from a council or housing association – is good for the nation. Advocates for new, high-quality housing need to seize the economic, social and environmental high ground to explain why new housing is both necessary and desirable. Ultimately, we must act on a crucial guiding principle: good-quality housing, for people of all incomes and circumstances, is a pillar of a civilised society.

Secondly, we need consensus on a coherent housing supply model for the future, which should encompass issues of social justice, investment patterns, housing quality, tenure and planning policy. This will require significant changes to the policy and legislative framework, for example to enable councils to build outstanding, inclusive and genuinely affordable homes.

Thirdly, we need consensus about the purpose of planning and this will require reforming the planning system. The current planning system does not command consensus between the public, private and voluntary sectors, and some of its outcomes are plainly against the long-term public interest. We urgently need to restore a comprehensive framework of place-making standards, and planning policy should be rebalanced to ensure social justice and outcomes for people are just as important as the needs of land-owners and developers.

There is no doubt that we will build new homes in Britain, but the challenge for all of us is whether we have the determination to leave future generations with a legacy of beauty and durability which truly meets the challenges of the 21st century. This means ensuring the homes we

build meet the needs of everyone in society – and it will need us to create a shared sense of purpose and partnership across politics and across sectors if we are to realise this ambition.

EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE: HOMES

Europe's housing problems vary from country to country.

In Germany, housing prices in many large cities have skyrocketed, while the number of social housing apartments has diminished considerably. Spain, with its high proportion of owner-occupied dwellings, is confronted with more than three million empty homes. Although prices have decreased by up to 40 per cent since 2008, many flats and houses remain unaffordable for a large number of Spaniards.

In large parts of central and eastern Europe, housing prices have stagnated or even fallen over the last few years. But many people, particularly in Hungary, have accumulated considerable debts in order to finance their new homes and are now unable to repay their loans.

Each national and even regional housing market, then, faces its own problems. Nevertheless, we generally see a lack of affordable homes, particularly in many of the larger cities across Europe. The consequences are twofold: first, too many people have to spend an enormous part of their income on housing; and second, it leads to the segregation of rich and poor, with considerable social and economic consequences.

The main task for social democracy in Europe therefore is to refocus on the importance of social housing to provide affordable homes. Vienna provides a good example, it has a long tradition of investing in high-quality social housing, and has recently restarted its social housing scheme to meet

increasing demand.

Social democrats must also ensure that private rents remain reasonable. In addition, it is crucial to prevent further segregation in our cities. This can be achieved by building social homes not only in poorer parts of the city, but also in wealthy neighbourhoods, and by accepting a certain number of higher income households in social homes.

Gerhard Marchl

7 | THINGS DON'T ONLY GET BETTER

Polly Billington

New connections and communities, new ways of standing strong together, can grow out of the intense disruption of the ways of the past. It is incumbent on the left to draw on the things people value from history and fashion them anew. The key to forging a new solidarity is connection and power. The left needs to think of its role – and the role technology can play – in bringing people together with shared interests and helping each other develop knowledge, skills and opportunities.

I fought a seat in 2015 where the community is proud of its past and anxious about its future. Where change is rarely seen in an optimistic light, but more often a threat. Where patriotism and solidarity were something people almost grieve for: things ain't what they used to be.

Thurrock's experience of globalisation has been harsh. Industries like logistics need fewer people and more skills than in the heyday of the docks. Retail work doesn't provide either the security or the pay that the trade unions had managed to negotiate in factories, paper mills and ports.

Pay is one thing: the loss of connection, community and shared experience arguably has more profound implications. You may get a pay rise, or gain a skill, but can you regain the connection if the workplace disappears, the physical community changes beyond recognition, and the

people you knew simply aren't there for you any more?

What Thurrock and places like it experience first, the rest of the country experiences eventually.

The left has emptied out its intellectual reserves by relying on a rational, redistributive state to offset a market that fails to pay a fair wage or give people the security they need to live. Whilst noble in its aims, this approach has left Labour with next to nothing to say about the other elements that make up a happy and fulfilling life.

Over recent years, a few on the left have tried to come to terms with some of the aspects of global change that were overlooked by the last Labour government. There have been many descriptions and analyses of that sense of solidarity lost and the decline of community, but little particularly successful in identifying what we might do about it.

Our efforts to understand the profound nature of this change have almost inevitably been tainted with pessimism and powerlessness. Our prescriptions have been tinged with nostalgia too, reverting to 'offers' we made in the 1980s or 1990s. We can't afford that anymore.

We now need to find a way to shape the changing nature of Britain in a way that will encourage the values we adhere to. We believe we achieve more together than we do alone: what is solidarity going to look like as the 21st century progresses?

New connections and communities, new ways of standing strong together, can grow out of the intense disruption of the ways of the past. It is incumbent on the left to draw on the things people value from history and fashion them anew, especially the things about which we can be proud and people feel deeply about. This will include our ability to harness our own sense of patriotism, to engender civic pride, and to bringing people together around shared effort and commitments. But to capture the spirit of the founders of the movement and the great leaders during

our times of maximum progress, we must understand that our current institutions and practices don't work anymore. We must apply our founding principles to the world as we find it and develop a solidarity for our time.

Reinventing solidarity

A key point about the founding motivations of the Labour movement that is too often forgotten is that it was for working people but not only about work. Labour was a party that fought exploitation of working people by the market *and* the state. We formed independent organisations that were underpinned by principles of shared ownership, mutual bonds, relationships of support and a system of reliance. We tapped into a tradition of English life that saw volunteering, local collaboration and looking out for each other as a way of giving people the chance to make their way in life. Labour was the party of the big society.

So while Labour grew as a movement out of the need to protect working people from some of the risks of industrial employment – being sacked, being underpaid, being injured or even killed at work – it was not only that. The cooperative movement was about protecting the consumer, from flour cut with chalk dust and grit in the grain. It was giving people a voice and a place at the table: the right to have a say in the decisions that are made. And as a result of that progress we were able to elect a municipal leadership that understood the importance of pooling risks and creating public goods – free education, parks and libraries. All of these reduced insecurity by bringing people together to solve their problems and freeing individuals up to seize the opportunities that were created.

After the defeat of 2010 and the imposition of ideologically-driven austerity on public services, many communities fought hard to keep their libraries open – and

this fight captures something important about the search for solidarity in our time. Libraries became symbolic buildings in communities, representing the importance not only of learning but doing it for free, and pooling resources to ensure everyone can do so. But do they continue to do so when knowledge is accessed so differently now? 19th century libraries were the internet of their day. If we are to solve 21st century problems, we need 21st solutions. If we hanker for public space for communal self-improvement, it might not have books or librarians in it.

So rather than trying to keep hold of all the cornerstones of our past communities, the left needs to ask a more challenging set of questions. If we were to create a free place of learning accessible to all, where people can gather, share ideas and knowledge, fit for the 21st century, what would it look like today? If we are to ensure the protections people need in an Uber-ised economy, what would it look like? If we are to ensure people are comfortable and secure in their homes, what is the 21st century way of creating homes and communities that are affordable and pleasant to live in?

Our principles of solidarity felt easier when there was less mobility and change, where differences between people were fewer and codes of conduct were dyed in the wool. In a world where codes of conduct conflict and experiences and traditions risk dividing people who live alongside each other, we must consider how we create a solidarity that protects our freedoms and increases our understanding of each other. The most recognisable indicator of globalisation isn't cheap clothes from Primark but the massive social change in our communities combined with wage stagnation. We need to find a powerful 21st century solidarity capable of bringing together radically changed communities.

Connection and power

The key to this is connection and power. Economic inequality is deeply rooted in the inequality of access to power and to skills and knowledge. The left could keep redistributing cash forever, but unless we tackle these fundamental inequalities we won't achieve a more profound equality of dignity, control and mutual and self-respect.

Solidarity in the 21st century needs to be the way we fight the isolation that entrenches inequality and about the way we aggregate power. Labour needs to think of its role in connecting people with shared interests or the ability to help each other with knowledge, experience, skills, opportunities – and also kindness.

Much of the pessimism of today's analysis is seated in a feeling that people aren't there for each other anymore. In fact kindness is facilitated in some extraordinary ways: complete strangers respond to calls for help across Facebook, raising money, cleaning houses, donating goods. Many of these kindnesses actually connect people who don't live far from each other, and yet don't 'know' each other. This actually helps to develop the wider networks that contribute to a community's resilience.

However, the strength of weak ties – Mark Granovetter's argument that we are more resilient through knowing more people a bit rather than a few people a lot – doesn't negate the fact that physical proximity, the geography of connection, is essential to the success of renewing our tradition of solidarity. Technology is at its most powerful when it combines connection in the digital realm with a real life relationship. The IPPR's Zero Carbon London plan is a good example of this. It stresses the importance of digital connectivity and smart use of data to make our cities more liveable, but also recommends the reparishing of London, to connect decision making more closely to where people live. Decisions made locally, by people who

can see the whites of each other's eyes, are as important as amassing data about how millions of people move around.

This is also about establishing the rules of the road. As a result of the biggest immigration wave in our country's history since 2001, communities are having to adapt to new people moving in. Even with the strictest immigration controls, that isn't going to stop altogether. Establishing common codes of behavior, what is expected of each other and what is not OK, requires connection and confidence in the ability to arbitrate and understand. Fractured communities find this harder, lose the chance to learn from each other and lose the 'strength of weak links' by turning in on themselves.

This is about resilience: about widening your networks beyond family and neighbours, your work friends and the street, to a community where you can rely on skills and expertise not held by your close circle. How can the left enable these sorts of networks to flourish? One current trend is towards devolving power to big metropolitan areas, but what will this mean for those small towns, coastal communities and suburbs where millions of people live? What does solidarity mean when economic insecurity is compounded by rapid social change and the chance to improve your life is at the far end of an expensive train line?

Solidarity in the new world of work

Inevitably, solidarity in the 21st century should be about a sense of place and belonging, connecting you to those who live nearby, and giving you individually more reach than you would on your own. And that applies to work too.

Since work is changing so much, and workplaces are less conducive to creating solidarity, now is a crucial moment for us to reconsider how we might establish solidarity at work.

We should be asking ourselves about the risks people now face at work. Building in a voice for the workforce at the top table is an essential in big firms. In small ones, support for job creation, and a renewal of the principles of good employer standards would help raise the bar. Already online, at glassdoor.co.uk, workers share tips on who are good and bad employers. That too is a transparency that facilitates choice for the individual but doesn't yet scale it to collective action to change things.

Insecurity is a huge issue for the ranks of the self-employed and small business people now, just as it was for the casualised dockers and factory workers before trade unions gave them protection. But the solutions vary because the freelance web designer and the casual construction worker's experience of insecurity, where they might find support and how they might develop resilience, are not the same.

This doesn't mean there isn't solidarity, but it is more likely to manifest itself in networks of information and support, without the formalised channels of organised labour. It creates communities of interest and connection both online and offline to facilitate access to work, to skills and to know-how. And it also gives you something in common.

People pool risk and opportunities, share ideas and ask for support, crowd source solutions and crowdfund projects in ways that would have been impossible only a few years ago. The skills and know how to do this are now the big divide.

So the task of the left should be to take on the massive failure of our education system to tool people up for the demands of 21st century work. There is almost nothing about the current system that enables people to learn across their working life, acquire skills that are transferable across industries that change so fast that progress in the job is almost impossible without regular upgrades. If

our technology updates itself this fast, why don't we think in a similar way about our own skill sets?

The greatest threat to opportunity and security today – and therefore the greatest barrier to the ability to share in community and build social bonds – is the digital divide, which gets wider the faster technology develops. In a world where people are self-organising to support each other, in a world where everyone, from barristers to baristas, can be freelance, where construction workers and accountants can find their community, online and offline, to share know-how and skills, tips and leads, the biggest risk is being cut out of those networks.

There was a time when if your dad was a docker, you were a docker. That was a security hard fought for. And it's gone. When the trade union and family ties can't deliver, a network of peers might just help. But the sons of dockers, however much they hunch over their smart phones, aren't necessarily reaping the benefits of the tech in their hands. It's still the ones with the social assets that are winning.

And we know one of the most toxic threats to any sense of solidarity is a welfare system that pits people against each other – where reward and need are seen as almost completely arbitrary. So as work changes, so social security must adapt, to pool risks, encourage contribution, and create a shared sense of responsibility and reward. At the heart of this must be making work pay. Subsidising low pay is not an acceptable option and our commitment to a real living wage needs to sit at the heart of a new programme for work justice.

So let's be clear: Labour's renewed solidarity must be rooted in identity, connection and community. If it reverts, as it frankly did in our 'offer' at the general election in 2015, to one based solely on economics it won't soothe the anxiety or overcome the discontents of modern Middle Britain.

From the energy price freeze through the £8 an hour minimum wage, to the crackdown on zero hours contracts,

the retail offer didn't reach anywhere near the deep anxiety about change, insecurity or sense of purpose that Labour campaigners saw close up in our communities.

Conclusion

People's anxiety about rapid change in their communities often reflects a feeling of lack of control. Hence, to be honest, the salience of the arguments about sovereignty in the referendum campaign. The fact we all surrender some sort of control in order to reduce the relentless amount of choices and decisions we would have to make every day has been lost because big decisions have been made without taking people with us. This is a particularly dispiriting legacy of the New Labour years when you examine the language Tony Blair used in the run-up to 1997.

I just ask you to youtube it: clips of Tony Blair talking about change in 1994–1997. And of course then people were crying out for it. After 18 years of the Tories, a clapped out and exhausted government had run out of ideas and was entirely out of touch with the prevailing mood of optimism which Labour was able to harness by embodying it. But listen and watch more carefully. He talks of managing change. Because he knew, and Labour as a party understood, change was happening that we would have to manage. Back then we didn't say globalisation was good for you. That sort of impatience with the electorate came later, as a result of years in government. Instead we made the case for change: hence the minimum wage, employment rights, Sure Start, smaller classes for our kids, devolution, commitment to international development and yes – even an ethical foreign policy. All things that signified change and actually managed somewhat the extremes of the change we couldn't stop.

Now we know that management on some of the big things just wasn't enough: from deregulation of the banks

to the over fast relaxation of immigration controls within the EU and a shocking failure to build more homes until the crash revived our belief in an active state. When we didn't manage those big changes right, we reaped the electoral consequences.

So when we develop our solidarity for the 21st century it should be one that captures the enduring principles of the Labour movement: establishing security in order to enable opportunity. To support communities to find their own solutions to problems, connecting them to the skills knowledge and assets that will help them flourish individually and collectively. Aggregating power so that decisions are made close to people, so that responsibility, like power, is shared.

The risk is if we only talk about opportunity we overlook the importance of solidarity in creating security. And if we only talk about security, we lose the optimism and openness to opportunity that solidarity brings with it.

EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE: SOLIDARITY

A recent study of how public opinion towards the EU has changed since the 1970s included three particularly striking findings – which run counter to the narrative you hear that the EU is either ineffective or illegitimate. Firstly, almost half of the respondents believed that the 'values of democracy and freedom' were the main element underpinning the EU's identity. This is the highest score ever, doubling the figure from before the crisis of 2008. Secondly, while almost 70 per cent think that the employment situation on the national level is bad, one third sees the EU as the player that can take 'effective action'. It is rated higher than the capacity of national governments. Thirdly, Europeans see social affairs and employment as the core priority for the EU budget spending. This is higher than economic growth, which used to come first.

So what lessons can we learn for the future shape of solidarity across the continent? First, the fundamental values that underpin the unique European social model cannot be negotiated. The UK's demands on workers' rights and welfare benefits therefore risk undermining the principle that for equal work there must be equal pay.

Secondly, the citizens of Europe still believe the EU is a project that can deliver. However, to achieve social progress for all and to enhance social cohesion, the commitment to the EU as a social contract has to be renewed.

Thirdly, and most strikingly, the current slow recovery is not being felt by working families, who continue to struggle in the face of persistent unemployment and shrinking welfare states. The EU legislation that could help has been put on hold while UK renegotiations are underway. So instead of an 'emergency brake', we need a decisive step forward – to ensure that the idea of 'social Europe' creates stronger collective bonds between the nations and the peoples of Europe.

Ania Skrzypek

8 | FUTURE-ORIENTED PUBLIC SERVICES

Keir Starmer

Public services face unprecedented challenges from demographic change and a sustained squeeze on the public finances. The response cannot simply be to reflate and recreate services designed for a different era. Instead, public service reform should be informed by the approach that underpins a new political project for the left: bold, ambitious and future-orientated.

When I was seeking selection as Labour's parliamentary candidate to succeed Frank Dobson in Holborn & St Pancras in autumn 2014, I embarked on a series of one-to-one conversations with local party members. Each session lasted about 45 minutes to one hour, usually around a kitchen table over tea or coffee.

What I discovered from hundreds of members – the vast majority of who were not 'active' members – was a deep disaffection: a feeling that Labour had somehow lost its way and, at some unspecified time, turned into a pale imitation of itself. This was a not a simple left/right divide; both those on the left and those on the right of our party were yearning for Labour to be more radical, more confident and, above all, more ambitious.

Subsequent meetings and discussions I have had with thousands of members, and indeed non-members, across the country suggest that this disaffection was not confined to Holborn and St Pancras.

How we rebuild our economy, our public services and our communities in the aftermath of the financial crisis in 2008 will define us for a generation. Labour's defeat in May 2015 means, however, that we will not be able to decisively shape and influence that reconstruction for another five years.

Instead, after a decade of a Conservative-led government, Labour will inherit a society with in-built and growing inequality, rising levels of child poverty and public services under increasing, perhaps fatal, strain.

That is why the stakes are so high for 2020 and why it is so vital that, four years before we face a general election, Labour manages to re-find the radicalism and ambition that has characterised the best moments of our past.

Part of that process is to address why, for the second time in five years, less than a third of the electorate felt able to vote for Labour.

Much of the analysis following May 2015 has identified the economy, welfare, immigration and leadership as our primary failings. The Beckett report, in particular, highlighted the key policy areas where we failed to convince voters. These findings have to be taken very seriously and each needs to be addressed. But they are evidence of past failure, not a roadmap for the future.

Labour's 2015 defeat has to be seen in a broader context. The wider retreat of many centre-left parties across Europe over the last decade underlines that we are seeing a crisis in social democratic politics.

This demands a fundamental re-evaluation of how the left can win power again and regain the right to reshape society. Unfortunately, in the UK, that re-evaluation has too often focused on the leadership of the Labour party rather that the future project that is so desperately needed if Labour are to return to power. It has been an analysis of personalities, not of policies. Of the here-and-now, not of the future. We need to look beyond the day-to-day of

Westminster and re-imagine and reinvigorate Labour for the future.

Finding the future

The Fabians' central role in the Labour movement over more than a century provides a valuable vantage point to assess where we have been successful and how we can win again.

Our history shows that Labour only wins power when it glimpses the future and fixes it with a bold, radical and ambitious project. And we do not do that very often. In fact, Labour has perhaps only done this three times.

In 1945, when the Attlee government founded the modern welfare state and redefined Britain's role in the world. It was Beveridge who in 1942 defined the five great evils of the age – Want, Ignorance, Squalor, Disease and Idleness. But it was Labour that had the radicalism and ambition to tackle them – creating the NHS, building more than a million homes and achieving near full employment.

Labour also had a clear project in the 1960s, when Harold Wilson talked of a "new Britain" being forged in the "white heat" of a "scientific revolution". Here was a vision of a more dynamic, emerging economy of the future – where the "cloth cap" would be replaced by the "white lab coat as the symbol of British labour". It was a vision that helped unite a fractured party, it seized science and technology for Labour and it was in stark contrast to the stuffy, old-fashioned Conservatism of the time.

In 1997 Labour again found a convincing voice which chimed with a country crying out for change – rebuilding our public services, introducing the minimum wage, lifting a million children out of poverty and tackling racial and sexual discrimination.

On each of these occasions our nation was faced with new challenges and Labour won because we presented an

optimistic vision of what Britain could be, and how these challenges should be tackled.

To re-find that vision for the 2020s and 2030s requires insight and clarity about how Britain is changing. About the changing nature of our economy, our workforce, our demographics, our climate, our experience and our expectations.

In my parents' generation there was an unstated assumption that opportunity would increase with time and that, while they did not have everything they wanted, their children and grandchildren would prosper. For my parents and for countless others, this expectation of there being a better tomorrow helped drive and sustain them. It was also part of what helped bind communities and the country together.

This is what we on the left mean when we speak of 'aspiration'; the aspiration to improve the lives of our families, our communities and our country. This collective aspiration is what gives Labour the drive to tackle inequality and improve the lives of everyone.

Today, however, the aspiration, and indeed assumption, that life will be better for those that come after us no longer holds. Young people in the UK now face an increasingly uncertain future; too often the outlook is a potent combination of increased debts and reduced opportunity.

Hence Alan Milburn, Chair of the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, has warned of a "corrosive" and "growing sense", that "Britain's best days are behind us rather than ahead". A recent Ipsos MORI poll also found that a majority of people now believe the next generation will be worse off than their parents' generation.

However, listing the ills of an increasingly fractured and unequal society has never been Labour's failing. Identifying what is wrong is not enough. The focus instead must be on devising a credible, future-orientated and ambitious response to these problems.

What Labour's electoral wins in 1945, 1964 and 1997 tell us is that if real change is offered in a way that speaks to people's hopes and aspirations (and those they harbour for their children) and by a party they trust, the British people will vote for it.

The 37 per cent of voters who put David Cameron back into Downing Street did not all do so because they saw in the 2015 Tory manifesto a vision of a better future. Many, if not most, did so because Labour failed to offer a compelling and credible alternative. Winning back this trust and crafting that alternative is now the most pressing task before us.

This cannot, of course, be achieved overnight but some aspects of a future-looking project are beginning to emerge. A purposeful, smart economy which gives priority to long-term investment not only to infrastructure and public services, but in people and skills; a sustainable approach to the environment, which puts a binding legal framework around both national and international commitments; real devolution of power to those who are in the best position to come up with innovative solutions to emerging problems; a renewed focus on tackling inequality; and a housing project centred on building more homes that are genuinely affordable both to buy and to rent.

There are many other components – many of which are covered by authors in this collection – but what they all share is an understanding that generational change is needed. I want to consider one aspect of this challenge that is particularly close to my heart: public services.

Future public services

Good public services have the potential to reach out to and improve our lives, to reduce inequality and to bind us together as a society. Improving public services is also one of the surest ways of improving the lives and life chances

of everyone in the UK. These are fundamentally Labour values.

Having run a national frontline public service for five years, I am also acutely aware of the impact that the current government's spending cuts and 'contract based' approach to public services is having.

As director of public prosecutions and head of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) between 2008–2013, I observed only too often a toxic mix of short-term decision-making, a lack of inter-departmental co-operation and repeated central government funding cuts being forced on public services without any strategic sense of purpose.

The CPS saw a 30 per cent funding cut over this period, which placed real strain on the service and staff. Other public services, though, have had an even tougher settlement, none more so than local government. Across England, local authorities are set to see a real terms funding cut of 56 per cent from 2015/16 to 2019/20. This follows a cut of more than a third in the last parliament.

My local council, Camden, has been one of the worst affected by these cuts. Indeed, from 2011 to 2017 Camden will have lost half its government funding, the eighth highest reduction for any council in England. This has meant councils such as Camden have had to make invidious decisions about which services to cut, which to save and which to prioritise for the future. All of this, of course, is far from conducive to encouraging the kind of long-term, strategic thinking we need in our public services.

Despite the resilience of those who work in our public sector, the reality of this sustained assault on public services will mean that by 2020 many public services will be qualitatively different to the ones Labour left in 2010.

Firstly, our public services will have increasingly become crisis services – dealing only with expensive end results, not preventing them occurring in the first place.

The clearest example of this is perhaps in the NHS, where the government have focused tightened resources on A&E, while failing to invest in key preventative areas such as social care, community solutions, mental health treatment and general practice. At a time when the UK has an ageing population (by 2030 the number of people over 75 is estimated to increase by 2.6 million) and is facing serious health challenges such as diabetes and a growing number of people with complex chronic conditions, there will be an inevitable increase in demand on health services.

In order to adapt to these pressures we will need to see a radical reshaping of the NHS to focus on prevention rather than cure, with resources shifted out to communities, GPs and new models of care.

The government's failure to invest in and create more preventative public services can also be seen beyond the NHS. Indeed, in some cases, I suspect the government has been more willing to cut preventative services because doing so, while financially more costly in the long-term, is less damaging in the short-term electoral cycle.

Take, for example, the government's decision to remove the ringfence from early intervention grants and (in November 2015) to cut the public health budget – policies the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission warned "are highly likely to store up much more expensive problems for public services to deal with later down the line" and "make sense only within a public finance model which cannot account for the savings accrued by early investment".

The fabric of our public services will also have been significantly altered by the government's 'contract-based' approach to delivery, under which the government have increasingly fallen into the trap of thinking that cheaper provision is synonymous with better provision.

An example of this I have seen all too clearly as shadow immigration minister is in the government's relocation

programme for asylum seekers, under which contracts to rehouse asylum seekers have been awarded to private companies. On a recent visit to Oldham – where Serco runs the contract – I saw that more than 600 asylum seekers have been accommodated under this project. It became apparent that this decision was not taken to meet the needs of the local community, those seeking asylum or with any consideration to the availability of local services. Instead, it was taken purely because the unit price of accommodation was lower here than elsewhere.

It is of course vital that all public service contracts represent good value for money for the taxpayers who fund and rely on them. If, however, public sector contracts are simply awarded to the lowest bidder on the basis of price not quality, then it should be no surprise when the services provided on this approach fail and the public lose faith in them.

There is also another, often overlooked, aspect of the 'contract-based' provision of public services: it creates and locks in a democratic deficit. It is one thing for a government to fight an election on a manifesto promise that it will increase private sector involvement in the delivery of public services, it is another for that government to sign private sector agreements spanning 10 or 20 years and to include inevitable and built in crippling penalty clauses for early termination. Such agreements undermine the constitutional and democratic principle that no one government can bind the next.

All of this poses a huge challenge for Labour; but also a huge opportunity. That is because the party that has the answer to this fundamental question – how to design and create the public services of the future – will win the right to shape them.

I profoundly believe that Labour's response cannot simply be to reflate and recreate services designed for a different era. That would not be ambitious; nor would it be effective.

Instead we need to take this opportunity to think more boldly and to reconfigure our public services to meet the challenges of the future. There can, of course, be no 'one size fits all' approach. Different public services address different needs and require different policy responses. To transform public services we also need to know and understand the nature of each of the services we seek to reform.

There are, however, some clear principles that should guide Labour in this.

First, reform should be premised on generational change and we should avow short-term fixes. To take an example from my old patch of criminal justice, targeted long-term investment in children at primary school (and even younger) who are struggling because of the circumstances in which they are growing up (which often combines poverty, poor housing and domestic violence) will pay much better dividends in terms of crime prevention than building bigger prisons could ever do. It would also hugely improve the life chances of the individuals concerned. This is precisely the kind of preventative investment that our public services are crying out for.

Second, reform should be based on a 'horizontal' approach to the provision of services. Services should be configured in a way that not only facilitates but requires connections between and across services. One of the most striking characteristics of our public services is that they too often seek to treat complex, multidimensional problems (for example repeat offending in our criminal justice system) with single-agency responses (harsher sentencing policy). Instead of this 'silo' approach, we need to ensure there are much better connections between services such as health, housing and criminal justice. This would both reduce long-term costs and would truly be transformational for many of the people who come into contact with these interrelated services.

Third, reform needs to shift control away from the centre and be focused closer to service users. This is by now a well-worn theme, but it is one Labour must capture in the decades to come. For inspiration we can start by looking at the unsung work of some Labour councils, who have led the way in devolving decision-making power to local people and communities, often with remarkable results in a time of huge constraints on local authority funding.

Above all our approach to public service reform should be informed by our wider approach: bold, ambitious and future-orientated. Not simply to defend what once was, but to imagine and create what comes next. That is what Labour has done at all the best moments in our history. It is what we must do again.

EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE: PUBLIC SERVICES

Despite great diversity across the continent, public services exhibit two broad common trends. On the one hand, they are affected by an on-going process of marketisation whereby provision is transferred from the public sector to mixed or private companies. On the other, they are one of the main targets of 'fiscal consolidation'. Under the pressure of continued deficit reduction, a further shift to markets seems likely.

Yet markets cannot be the only answer. First, because their conception of utility is necessarily one of short-term profitability, while most public services respond to a logic of long-term social utility. Second, the private sector often does not provide for the large scale, long-term investment needed, especially if it is perceived as risky. What's more, the debasing of public services in Europe is particularly worrying because it affects social cohesion and reinforces the rapid rise of inequalities.

Of course, it is the role of national governments to design the reforms they deem are fair. But there are two important ways the EU could play a more positive role in turning the tide away from marketisation and austerity. First, there is already a legal basis in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union for issuing EU legislation on common principles for public services. We could make sure that all Europeans have minimum standards of quality, accessibility and affordability. Mechanisms for implementation, reporting and evaluation could be set up, in the same way they exist in many other domains. Second, while national states are impoverished, some resources from the EU budget could be used systematically for supporting public services. The fact that Jean-Claude Juncker's investment plan does not contain one line on social investment is a great disappointment.

An active EU policy could help make public services more efficient. But it is important to remember that one cannot do better and better with less and less. A reasonable amount of resources are needed; reform and modernisation must go hand in hand with continued public investment.

Amandine Crespy

9 | CREATING A MORE EQUAL FUTURE

Martin O'Neill

A political response adequate to the problems of future inequality must be about more than tweaks to the tax or welfare system. Just as the post-war Labour government was able to embed a new, more egalitarian settlement into the centre of our shared national life, so too in the 21st century the left must think about what kinds of public institutions would have to be brought into being in order to create a better, wealthier and more equal society.

Britain has long been a country riven by deep inequalities. Inequalities of income, wealth, prestige, and power; inequalities of opportunities, life chances and social class; inequalities between different ethnic groups, between generations, between regions and nations, and between men and women. The Thatcher governments, by reducing the power of trade unions and increasing the power of financial capital, super-charged British inequality, and while the New Labour governments were able to arrest this accelerating growth in economic inequality, they did not take the kinds of more ambitious steps that would have been necessary to reverse it. And now, following the financial crisis of 2008 – a crisis created by the failures of the financial sector – the Conservatives have brought Britain into a cruel new era of austerity politics, in which working people are hit by cuts to their public ser-

vices, supposedly to pay for a crisis for which they are not responsible and from which they did not benefit.

Things are bad now but, in the absence of radical political change, things are going to be far worse still by the middle of the 21st century. As Thomas Piketty shows in *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, the trend both in the UK and in other wealthy countries since the breakdown of the post-war consensus has been both to see increasing divergence in market incomes between those at the top of the income distribution and those in the bottom 90 per cent. Alongside this, capital's share of total economic returns is rising, as labour's share of national income falls. With wealth inequality already significantly higher than income inequality, a shift in economic returns from labour to capital further increases overall economic inequality, as those with pre-existing financial or housing wealth continue to prosper in an economy in which the wages of ordinary people stagnate. Yet even within the category of returns to capital, we have a financial system of hedge-funds and elite 'wealth management' that can create lavish returns for the very wealthiest, whilst ordinary savers are ripped-off by a cartel of uncompetitive banks, thereby further stretching inequalities of wealth. On top of all this, a number of commentators have argued that we stand at the precipice of an era of runaway technological unemployment, as the mechanisation of many occupations will see millions of jobs destroyed: in a world of driverless cars, there will be powerful forces to create lengthening dole queues.

Setting aside these longer-term trends towards inequality, even the near future looks exceedingly bleak. Fabian Society research by Andrew Harrop and Howard Reed, in their *Inequality 2030* report, paints a distressing picture. On current trends, given cuts and benefit changes announced by the coalition government, we are likely to see an extra 3.6 million people falling into poverty by 2030, including

1.2 million children, with the incomes of high-income household rising 11 times faster over the period than the incomes of low-income households. All this is against a background where an undersupply of private housing, and a withdrawal of support for public housing, means that the cost of living will continue to rise for the millions of people who face a future of relentlessly rising rents, while the attractive returns that can come from home-ownership are reserved for a diminishing number of the already economically successful (or those who have the good fortune to inherit previous generations' gains).

As Tony Crosland argued 60 years ago, it is the defining mission of social democracy to create a more equal society. Crosland was writing during the high tide of the post-war consensus, when Britain was as equal a society as it had ever been; the mission of creating a more equal society is now both more urgent and more challenging. How might a future Labour government go about reversing these baleful recent trends in UK inequality, and creating a more equal society? Before considering what concrete steps could be taken, it's worth first giving some attention to *why* inequality is quite so troubling, and why its reduction should be a central goal for a future political programme on the left. Understanding the full range of ways in which inequality is damaging and destabilising is important as a precondition for seeing both the urgency of action, and the full range of interventions that such action might involve.

Why care about inequality?

In their well-known book *The Spirit Level*, subtitled *Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better*, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett show that there are a significant number of reasons to object to large inequalities, because of the consequences that such inequalities bring in their wake. High levels of inequality lead to higher rates of

mortality and morbidity, higher rates of violence, mental illness, obesity and teen pregnancy. More equal societies do better on a broad range of indicators, and avoid many of the pressing social problems that inequality helps to create. The argument made by Wilkinson and Pickett is persuasive and powerful, and would suffice on its own to show that we as a society ought to act to reduce economic inequality.

More recently, though, a different kind of argument has begun to be made against high levels of inequality, based not on its effects on health, social problems or social cohesion, but more directly in terms of its economic effects. In their 2015 report *In It Together: Why Less Inequality Benefits Us All*, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which is hardly a bastion of left-wing thinking, makes the simple case that, above a certain level, inequality undermines economic growth. The OECD estimate that the rise in inequality observed between 1985 and 2005 in 19 OECD countries was responsible for knocking off something in the region of 5 per cent of cumulative growth. By allowing such high levels of inequality during the past 30 years, the world's richest countries have not only shifted wealth and income from most working people to a small economic elite, but they have also sabotaged their overall economic prospects, wantonly destroying hundreds of billions of pounds of wealth. The badly-off are more likely to spend their income than are the wealthy, and so shifts in income from the poor to the rich undercut aggregate demand, thereby cutting the legs from economic development. Moreover, economic inequality leads to under-investment in people's education and skills, as the badly-off have to live week-to-week instead of being able to invest in their own longer-run development. As the OECD put it, growing inequality "implies large amounts of wasted potential and lower social mobility".

The relationship between inequality and social mobility leads on to a further crucial element of the case for a more equal society. It was common in the past for debates within the Labour party to be conducted between stylised positions that were labelled 'equality of outcome' and 'equality of opportunity'. But as the relationship between inequality and social mobility has come to be better understood, the uselessness of that distinction has become clear. Social mobility and (even approximate) equality of opportunity are possible only when the range of overall economic inequality is reduced. As the economist Miles Corak has shown in his work on 'The Great Gatsby curve', there is a very strong correlation between more equal societies and greater social mobility. The countries that do best for social mobility are places such as Finland, Norway and Denmark, where levels of inequality are relatively low. In more unequal societies, such as the US and UK, social mobility has stalled to an alarming degree, with the UK having the bleakest prospects for social mobility of any EU country.

Lived experience in contemporary Britain bears out the social reality of these dispiriting statistics all too vividly. We live in a country where an absurd proportion of those entering our most prestigious universities (as high as 45 per cent at Oxford) are drawn from the small section of society (about 7 per cent) who are privately educated; and where seven in 10 senior judges, seven in 10 senior military officers, and around half of newspaper columnists are from that same, narrow public school section of society. It is difficult to think of the UK as a well-functioning democracy when, rather than using the talents and abilities of all of its population, we have a political system in which the prime minister and his main party rival were at school together, and where they and the current chancellor were, while at university, members of the same contemptuous gang of weirdly-dressed vandals. Just as worrying,

the effects of deep inequality seep into every pore of our political life, as when the prime minister and chancellor can think it appropriate to attend the Christmas party of Rupert Murdoch; the elected representatives of the British people genuflecting to a foreign billionaire whose newspapers and television stations had done their part in securing a Conservative victory in 2015.

The significance of inequality isn't about numbers. It isn't about wanting every individual to be equally well-off. It's not about uniformity, or envy, or levelling down. We care about equality because we want a decent and humane society. A society where every citizen is treated with equal respect, that rewards effort and talent and hard work instead of family connections or social class, and finds ways of using the tremendous potential of all of its people.

Our society now is one in which low wages and weak employment protection not only allow employers to short-change workers, but in which, because of an increasingly flexible labour market and the weak bargaining position of workers relative to their bosses, those workers come to be dominated by the power that others have over them. In the same way, the divide between the asset-rich and the asset-poor is not just a divide in pounds and pence, but a divide in terms of hope and confidence in the future, and in terms of the reasonableness of seeing oneself as someone with a firm and secure place within society. We care about inequality because, in a democratic society in which economic and political institutions should be justifiable to those who live under them, people's status and self-respect should be secured, and nobody should have to face demeaning forms of oppression caused by an economic or political system that is tilted against them from the start.

Our society is one that has descended to a level of inequality whereby the basic legitimacy of our institutions is coming under strain. When our economic and political

systems become a cascade of unearned and unfair privilege, with power flowing between interconnected elites while everyone else's life chances flounder, the time has come for a radical change of direction.

What To Do About It?

The goal of creating a better society, one less scarred by the destructive consequences of inequality, will require the pursuit of a variety of different strategies. It will require both the defence and development of the cherished egalitarian institutions that we still have – especially the NHS and our state school system – but it will also require the creation and growth of new egalitarian institutions fitted for the challenges of a different century.

The left has to think more expansively about what a political response adequate to the problems of future inequality would really look like. It has to be about more than just tweaks to the tax or welfare system, important though they are. Just as the post-war Labour government was able to embed a new, more egalitarian settlement into the centre of our shared national life, so too in the 21st century we have to think about what kinds of public institutions would have to be brought into being in order to create a better, wealthier and more equal society. Here are just three of the steps that could be taken as part of a radical and ambitious programme for a more equal society.

A National Childcare Service

One area where there is a pressing need for a better set of institutions is with regard to pre-school childcare. The lack of affordable childcare options forces many women out of the workforce, thereby increasing inequalities between men and women, and between parents and those without children, while also harming the economy by disrupting

the development and preservation of workplace skills, with many women finding that their careers stall once children arrive. It is no coincidence that the countries that do best for gender equality in terms of workplace participation – such as Iceland, Sweden and Denmark – are those that invest most in childcare provision. The Conservatives' solution to the crisis of childcare provision has been to promise to increase the number of free hours provision for children over three, but this kind of 'demand side' reform can fail in the absence of more fundamental change to the landscape of pre-school care provision. If the monetary value that government assigns to 'free' hours is too low, then this simply pressures nurseries to cut costs, keep wages low, and avoid investing in their staff's training and development; and, where there is a shortage of nursery places, private providers would simply be able to use higher income in nursery fees to drive up their profits rather than to drive up standards of care. Labour's Sure Start centres show what a different approach might look like: public sector childcare centres, embedded in their local communities, in which the aim of providing care and support, rather than the profit motive, would have the upper hand, and where the important job done by nursery caregivers could receive greater recognition and reward.

A 'public option' for pre-school childcare would be an approach that would learn from the successes of neighbouring countries, as in Demark where three-quarters of childcare provision is in the public sector. Recent work by the Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman has shown the extraordinary effectiveness of investing in early-childhood care, to the extent that such programmes more than pay for themselves in terms of improving the long-run economic prospects of less-advantaged children, and increasing parents' participation in the economy. An optimistic and ambitious social democratic vision is one where these sorts of long-sighted investments in creating a

more equal society *and* a more prosperous economy could be made with confidence.

A National Education Service

One of the most intriguing ideas floated during Jeremy Corbyn's campaign for the Labour leadership last summer was for the idea of a lifelong "National Education Service", to provide ongoing opportunities for education and training beyond standard school age. In a fast-moving economy in which people often need to change jobs, inequalities in people's abilities to invest in their own skills and education can play out as further inequalities in employment opportunities and future prospects. We've not yet heard much of this idea, but it is exactly the kind of inventive, institution-building proposal that could help Labour to address inequality more profoundly, and create a basis for a 21st century centre-left politics that is alive to the challenges of a new kind of labour market.

As with a national childcare service, a national lifelong education service should not be seen as a drain on public resources, but as a way for the state to make long-run investments in the most valuable resource that a country possesses: its own people. It would short-circuit one of the most pernicious effects of inequality, as identified by the OECD: that is, the catch-22 situation that stops the less affluent from making the investments in their own long-run skills and education that could improve their economic situation. But it would also communicate something profound and important to the people who would benefit from such opportunities: that this is a society of equals, where nobody is thrown onto the scrapheap because of the vagaries of unpredictable economic change, but where citizens are given the help that they need, when they need it, to face the future with optimism and self-respect.

A British Sovereign Wealth Fund

In his 2015 book *Inequality: What Can Be Done?* the economist Sir Tony Atkinson, one of the world's leading experts on the changing face of economic inequality, has produced a compelling agenda of fifteen proposals, ranging across a range of areas of social, fiscal and industrial policy, for how to create a more equal society. All politicians on the left, especially in Britain, should read Atkinson's book, which is full of sound advice on practicable policies that could stop the onward rush to ever more inegalitarian outcomes, and restore a more decent economic settlement to the UK. All of Atkinson's proposals are worthy of careful discussion, but here I want to focus on just one of them: his call for the creation of a British sovereign wealth fund. In proposing such a fund, Atkinson is in effect resurrecting a proposal made half a century ago by his former teacher, the Nobel Prize-winning economist James Meade, who argued for the creation of a 'National Asset' of publicly held investment wealth. Atkinson argues that we should create a Public Investment Authority, operating a sovereign wealth fund with the aim of building up the net worth of the state by holding investments in companies and in property. Atkinson suggests that such a holding of public wealth could be used to fund a citizen's basic income, although it could of course be used in other ways.

Considering the long-run trends identified by Thomas Piketty, whereby we should expect capital's share of national income to grown in the future, as the share of national income going to wages reduces, it makes sense to think of ways in which returns to investment wealth could be used for the more general good rather than further contributing to inequality. Bringing in the prospect of future technological innovation, and the unemployment likely to come in its wake, makes things starker still: in an era where more and more income is generated by robotic rather than

human workers, the question of who will own the robots becomes urgent. A collective sovereign wealth fund would allow the state itself to build up a sustainable source of revenue distinct from its traditional fiscal base, and would allow the likely future growth of capital returns to be leveraged for egalitarian public purposes, rather than allowing such trends to drive inequality. Norway, for example, used a significant part of its North Sea oil revenue to build up the kind of sovereign wealth fund that Atkinson has in mind. By judicious, forward-looking public investment, the citizens of Norway now have an extraordinary public asset, which can be used for collective public ends. There could be many ways of building up such a fund, whether through capital taxation, share levies, the use of windfall returns, or even by the direct use of central bank funds through monetary finance.

Conclusion

An egalitarian agenda for the 21st century needs to be prepared to move beyond well-established ways of doing things and inadequate, weakly ameliorative measures, and instead bring back into life the kind of institutional innovation that served the left so well in the middle of the previous century. There were flashes of inspired policy in Labour's agenda coming into the 2015 election, such as the suggested reforms to corporate governance that would have put workers on remuneration committees, proposals for greater support for cooperatives and mutuals, enhanced investment in innovation and infrastructure, and a reduction in the cost to students of higher education. But these elements did not always feel as if they joined-up into a coherent plan for a more equal and successful society; there were many promising strands in Labour's thinking, but without the impression that they had been fully woven together.

For parties of the left, working out coherent and radical vision for a better, more egalitarian society is a daunting task, but it is an achievable one. Undertaking this task successfully will involve the left giving up its habit of seeking refuge in unhelpful dichotomies: we face not a choice *between* redistribution and predistribution, but the requirement to think about how the two can best be integrated. Neither do we face a choice *between* the power of the central state and the radical potential of local communities, but instead the task of seeing how the state can create institutions that take on a transformative role in people's real lives. In a society disfigured by the scourge of deep inequalities of wealth, power and prospects, parties of the left need to be able to paint a bolder picture, on a broad canvass, of a political project and a set of institutions that could liberate the potential of every citizen.

EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE: INEQUALITY

Since the global financial crisis European economic policies have overwhelmingly focused on fiscal containment and debt reduction rather than promoting equitable growth and the creation of quality jobs. However, the pervasive negative effects of such a strategy are becoming increasingly evident. Several European economies are failing to return to pre-crisis levels of growth and employment and, more worryingly, inequalities are growing. In Europe, the GINI coefficient, which measures the extent to which the distribution of income among individuals deviates from a perfectly equal distribution, is on the rise. In the Euro area, for instance, the GINI coefficient increased from 29.4 in 2005 to 31 in 2014 and in some countries the increase has been very significant. In Spain for example the GINI coefficient increased from 31 to 34.7 over the same period.

However, it is not only inequality of income and wealth we need to be worried about. In Europe other types of inequality are also on the rise. It is becoming increasingly evident, for example, that European policy reforms are shifting the burden of debt and deficit adjustments onto women. Women have been significantly affected by cuts in public sector jobs. Furthermore, cut-backs to state-provided care services are also seeing women return to their traditional gender roles, stepping out of formal employment to take over caring responsibilities no longer funded by the state. All of this is negatively impacting on progress towards gender equality.

Europe needs an alternative strategy which puts people, sustainability and equality at centre stage rather than fiscal deficits and debt. We need a new strategy that focuses on greater investment in care, social infrastructure and the green economy and a serious reconsideration of austerity policies and their impact on equality and well-being.

Giovanni Cozzi

10 | WHO ARE WE NOW AND WHO DO WE NEED TO BE?

Rokhsana Fiaz

Traditionally, the left has used the idea of 'British' identity to encompass a huge range of people. This doesn't hold sway in the face of Scottish, Welsh and English patriotism, or in light of demographic changes occurring across Britain. We need to develop an inclusive British national identity which is respectful of and builds upon the identities that people value.

The subject of British identity always evokes a fraught reaction from both the left and right, as conversations are contoured by deep-rooted anxieties about who we are as a nation. At a time of rapid global changes and demographic shifts occurring in our own population, we are faced with a range of challenges that need to be negotiated due to the varied cultural, ethnic and religious differences that exist among our people.

Social inclusion, community cohesion and British values have become frequent terms in political discourse since the first wave of mass immigration from the Commonwealth countries after the second world war. They have become more pronounced during the past two decades as a consequence of our membership of the European Union and as conflicts around the world lead to mass movement of people and heighten debates about refugees and immigration.

And now questions of national identity have been brought even more sharply into focus by the devolution and localism agendas. The Scottish independence referendum in 2014 and this year's EU referendum have brought to the fore Britain's multiple identities. There's been a passionate revival of nationalist tendencies, not only in Scotland and Wales but also in England: all challenging long held views of what it means to be British and our attachment to Britain's history of empire and colonialism.

In the 2011 census, when the question of nationality was asked for the first time, 60 per cent of people in England subscribed to a purely English identity. This is compared with just under 30 per cent who felt a predominant British identity and 20 per cent a uniquely British identity. All English regions, with the exception of London, saw an English predominant identity record more than 70 per cent, the highest of which was recorded in the north-east of England. By contrast, 38 per cent of English people from an ethnic minority said they were exclusively British, as against only 14 per cent of white people. The ethnic groups in England most likely to say they were British were Bangladeshi, Pakistani and people who trace their background to India.

Labour has struggled to grasp the significance of Englishness in its traditional voter heartlands and faces a challenge around national identities. Traditionally it has used the idea of 'British' identity to encompass a huge range of people. This doesn't hold sway in the face of Scottish, Welsh and English patriotism, or in light of demographic changes occurring across Britain. So the progressive left is confronted by both a set of exciting opportunities and potentially disruptive challenges about how best to construct a notion of British identity as we continue to define our place in the world in this complex 21st century.

While it feels like the greatest challenge for our politics today is how to bind us together, this argument is

not new. Back in 2000, the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain addressed some of these questions at a time when multiculturalism was being criticised as a failure. It was felt that the policy was causing breakdowns in community relations in some parts of the country because it weakened the processes that could forge a shared British identity. It raised a fundamental question: whether a multicultural society needed a single common identity to hold it together at a time of rapid social, economic and cultural changes brought about by globalisation.

So what lessons can be drawn from that period to answer that very same fundamental question today? At the time, the Commission recognised that "the fundamental need, both practical and theoretical, is to treat people both equally and with the respect for difference; to treasure the rights and freedoms of individuals; and to cherish belonging, cohesion and solidarity". This suggests that a singular British identity is not needed, but two things are: a set of moral values and principles (for example a commitment to democracy and equality) and a shared political culture in the sense of institutions and practices (such as adherence to the rule of law).

The Commission talked about cohesion in connection with its notion of a "community of communities":

> *"Britain needs to be, certainly, 'one nation' – but understood as a community of communities and a community of citizens, not a place of oppressive uniformity based on a single substantive culture. Cohesion in such a community derives from a widespread commitment to certain core values, both between communities and within them."*

So difficult questions about what it means to be British are not new. Yet it is a debate that can too easily

adopt a cultural essentialist approach, which in defining Britishness produces a checklist of core common characteristics that everyone has to encompass. Such developments are also linked with increased emphasis in official discourses in Europe and North America on culture as a source of tension and conflict, and the emergence of religion and belief as a polarising fault line in the world today. The picture is made more complicated by the growth of fanaticism and by a suspicion amongst many in the UK, Europe and the wider world that religion is a significant source of the world's ills.

British social attitude surveys have also revealed what the public think about British identity, with the bar being raised for Britishness as more people expect those who are truly British to live in Britain, speak English and have British ancestry. Over the years, we have seen measures such as naturalisation ceremonies, the requirement for English language proficiency, and citizenship education for migrants and all school children. However, this doesn't adequately respond to the dynamic nature of culture or the diversity of cultures which need to co-exist within national boundaries, whether that be different faiths, different ethnic backgrounds, or the constituent nations of the UK.

So how does the progressive left respond to issues of British identity? The Labour party is still experiencing convulsions from its seismic 2015 election defeat, when it was roundly routed in significant parts of the country: in the words of Jon Cruddas, Labour "lost everywhere to everybody". What can the left offer in response to the sociological, demographic and economic trends that are re-shaping our country and which need to be understood more deeply as Labour embarks on a renewal process in the run-up to 2020 and beyond? Crucially, the left needs to find a language and practice that can respond to the dynamics of identity and belonging, which are shaping both domestic and global politics.

Lessons from other parts of the world can be instructive, where multiculturalism has been adopted as a state or national project: Canada, Australia and Malaysia. Even in the US, where the federal state has had a much lesser role in the multicultural project, the incorporation of ethno-religious diversity and hyphenated Americans (such as Italian-American) has been about country-making, civic inclusion and making a claim upon the national identity. This is notwithstanding the emergence of Donald Trump as a serious contender for the Republican presidential nomination, which has revived debates about race, religion and minorities in America. Closer to home, both Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National Party, broadly progressive parties, have been successful in constructing notions of identity which are open to everyone.

If we can reframe the debate to ask *what* does it mean to be British given our multicultural reality (reflecting the multicultural world), then the conversation can be more inclusive. This would draw all people into a conversation about a common sense of belonging, equality and fairness and justice; and how a meaningful stake in society can be transmuted at a time when technological innovations, the digital revolution and the complexities of the global economy are profoundly transforming the way we live, work and interact with each other.

It is a debate that needs to acknowledge that people may want to hold on to and cherish 'difference' but doesn't preclude an emphasis on commonality. That commonality is promoting multicultural citizenship, a citizenship seen in a plural and dispersed way – where the celebration of multiple identities makes for a stronger collective whole. This is especially important as the progressive left debates Britain's role in a rapidly changing world and how we can construct a British identity that looks outward based a new internationalism: curious about the new world and interested in adapting to it.

There is no contradiction here, for emphasising and cultivating what we have in common is not a denial of difference – it all depends upon what kind of commonality is arrived at. Difference and commonality are not either or opposites but are complementary. More than that, commonality must be difference-friendly, and if it is not, it must be remade to be so. Labour needs to confront the reality of nationalist tendencies that exists in different parts of Britain; but also ensure that when it comes to Englishness, it is as inclusive as is Welsh and Scottish patriotism.

This does not mean weak or indifferent national identity: on the contrary, multiculturalism requires a framework of dynamic national narratives and the ceremonies and rituals, which give expression to a national identity. Minority identities are capable of generating a sense of attachment and belonging, even a sense of a 'cause' for many people – look at how London was projected as a vibrant, dynamic *and* diverse global city which led to Britain hosting the 2012 Olympics.

We need an inclusive British national identity which is respectful of and builds upon the identities that people value and does not trample upon them. And a sense of belonging to one's country is necessary to make a success of a multicultural society that is responding to the challenges of an interconnected world. This needs to underpin the political vision of social reform and justice in the 21st century being debated by the progressive left in Britain as Labour embarks on its renewal; and it must include these aspects of multicultural citizenship.

EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE: BRITAIN

Britain has always been an awkward partner for the EU, with renegotiations, opt-outs, special rebates and a general contrariness. Whatever the final outcome, the 2016 renegotiation and referendum is another step in an increasingly clumsy dance. From a progressive European perspective, the British situation poses a number of challenges.

First of all, the British situation is an infuriating distraction from the real problems the EU faces. The renegotiation does nothing at all to help respond to the financial crisis, to the migrant crisis, to the democratic crisis of the EU. Indeed, if anything it deepens them by permitting one country to negotiate a special deal for itself – something that goes fundamentally against the grain of good principles in an international organisation.

Secondly, the terms of the British renegotiation represent a further dilution of the progressive content of the EU. Lighter regulation has too often become a code-word for weakening standards in employment laws, in social protections, in environmental safeguards. The opt-outs in relation to common provisions regarding benefits represent a further weakening of common standards, and results in citizens from some countries being forced into second-class status.

But does that mean a progressive Europe would be better off without Britain? No – simply because progressive ideals and principles demand that we be open and inclusive. Speaking about J. Edgar Hoover, Lyndon B. Johnson famously said it's better to keep troublesome colleagues inside the tent rather than have them outside creating trouble. For progressive Europeans, it is of course better to have Britain inside the tent, but let us also hope they can be persuaded to be less troublesome partners in our union in future.

Michael Holmes

11 | COLLABORATION NOT CONTROL

Ed Wallis

While the new political landscape offers great challenges for the left, there are opportunities to build a powerful new coalition – if social democratic parties are able to recognise them and respond. For the Labour party, the crux of this lies in learning to collaborate and combine, rather than control and capture: to work alongside the new forces of energy in society, but not try to co-opt them.

We are living in a political age where the extraordinary has become commonplace and where events unfold without any regard for the conventional rulebook. In the UK, we have witnessed Jeremy Corbyn's unexpected and unstoppable rise to the summit of Labour politics, and the SNP's complete reshaping of the contours of Scottish democracy. UKIP has emerged as a major force in England and Wales; there has been talk of a 'Green surge'; we might even remember Cleggmania. This list includes small tremors and major tectonic shifts, but each tells of how, as the *Guardian* journalist John Harris put it, "around once a year now, something bubbles to the surface that shows how broken mainstream politics has become".

This sense of disruption has been felt in different ways right across Europe. Traditional political parties have been buffeted by forces that they seem incapable

of understanding, as they struggle to speak to the rise in identity politics, the consequences of globalisation and the changing instincts of a fast moving society. From crisis-struck Greece to the social democratic mecca of Scandinavia, insurgents, populists and pirates are blowing a whirlwind through the political establishment.

In electoral terms, it is parties of the centre-left who appear to be struggling the most. Despite a post-crash period that saw a sense of tumult pervade public life, the UK has its first majority Conservative government in nearly two decades. As Nick Pearce, former director of the IPPR, has pointed out, few European social democratic parties now manage to attract upwards of 30 per cent of the vote in national elections, whereas the conservative instincts of an ageing population are providing a bedrock of support for the centre-right.

So what are the changing conditions of our democracy? And while it seems clear that the edifice of traditional social democracy is crumbling, can something new be reshaped from the rubble?

Disconnection and decline

Part of what we are seeing is the consequence of the long-term dealignment of the political system and the decline of traditional party loyalties. In the UK, the high water-mark of the two party system was 1951, where a worn out Labour government lost the general election even though it won the popular vote and secured the largest ever number of votes for social democracy. Labour and the Conservatives won 97 per cent of the vote between them. Since then we have witnessed a steady reduction in the number of people supporting the two main parties – from 89 per cent in 1970 to 65 per cent in 2010. It ticked up a bit in 2015 to 67 per cent, as the Conservatives found a way to defy political gravity and increase the vote share of a

governing party, mostly at the expense of their partners in power, the Liberal Democrats, who collapsed entirely. This has often been the fate of junior coalition partners across the EU, as the FDP in Germany and most recently the Irish Labour party show.

A second big trend is the ever-decreasing trust in political parties. There has been an arms race between pollsters to find the most shocking comparator for the public's disdain for their elected representatives – one poll in the US found Congress was less popular than cockroaches. The most recent Ipsos MORI poll in the UK settled for reiterating that yes, in 2016 politicians remain less trusted than estate agents, journalists and bankers. Peter Mair – whose *Ruling the Void* has quickly become the classic tome in charting the rise a professional political class and their uncoupling from their electorates – describes this process as not so much loss of trust but growing indifference: "it is important to recognise that politics and politicians might simply be deemed irrelevant by many ordinary citizens." It is undoubtedly true that people have a sense that politics is a game, being played for the amusement of a disconnected few who are entirely removed from real life. But alongside indifference is increasing evidence of anger at a rarefied elite. Recent Fabian focus groups found visceral hostility when people were asked for the first thing that came into their minds when they think about politicians: "above everyone else" and "not like us" were some of the most commonly heard responses.

The most obvious expression of this trend has been declining participation in elections. In the UK this journey reached its nadir in 2001, when the re-election of Tony Blair's government only managed to rouse 59 per cent of registered voters to the polls. In the recent general election, a tight contest, good weather and the prospect of a hung parliament led to high hopes for a significant fillip, but turnout only crept up by 1 percentage point. Particularly

worrying was that Ipsos MORI found the patterns of differential turnout – what the IPPR has called "turnout inequality" – remained unchanged. 18–24 year-olds are almost half as likely to vote as those aged 65, and we see much lower turnout among lower income groups, those who rent their homes, and BAME communities.

As pollsters and pundits have discovered to their cost, predicting how these trends will manifest themselves next week is a fraught business, let alone in 10 years' time. But what we can see clearly is that our politics is becoming more fluid, more plural, less hierarchical and decidedly undeferential.

What's left?

These are the political trends that are affecting all western democracies in the 21st century. But they have combined with wider changes in our economy and society to present mainstream parties of the left with a particular existential challenge. The changing nature of the economy and the work we do – discussed in detail elsewhere in this book – means the very conditions in which mass social democratic parties emerged have changed irrevocably. Jon Cruddas and Jonathan Rutherford observed before the last election that "in the last 30 years, the shift from an industrial to a service economy has caused dramatic changes in the nature of working life, from full-time work mainly done by men to increasingly decentralised and more flexible forms of employment." This means social democratic parties have lost their "social anchorage in the coalitions built up around the old industrial working class … Once great ruling parties have become hollowed out and are in danger of shrinking into professionalised political elites."

This is the nexus that makes the trends that are reshaping our politics, our economy and our society so toxic for mass social democratic parties. Labour's historic cultural

connection with particular places, and its presence in the fabric of specific communities, has been severed. It has been replaced by a professional political class who know the corridors of Westminster but not the contours of everyday life. A political party system that no longer seems to reflect life as it is lived today is particularly damaging for a party that sprang directly from its challenges.

As this disconnection grows, the left is missing democratic energy that may not see much use for party politics, but is flourishing in many corners of the country. As Graeme Cooke wrote in *Still Partying Like It's 1995*, "while formal democratic involvement is more fragile, other forms of civic and political participation are holding up and finding new avenues of expression". So while membership of political parties and trade unions has generally been falling, single issue campaigns and 'clictivism' have been thriving, driven by technology and sitting more comfortably with the lifestyles and preferences of a new generation of activists. It remains to be seen whether the influx of new Labour party members and supporters Jeremy Corbyn's leadership campaign inspired was a rekindling of the former or a manifestation of the latter.

Outside the sphere of politics, we can see democratic strength in the healthy membership numbers of many large charities, in particular environmental charities. We are also witnessing what the author Henry Hemming calls the growing "power of association". Hemming suggests that under the radar of mainstream politics, there are a many as 1.5 million small groups – from sports teams and book clubs to choirs and parks friends groups – who regularly come together around common interests. The Fabian Society report *Pride of Place* showed the strong connection people have to the places they live and the people they live there with, and how this resonant attachment to place forms a bedrock for local social action.

This is evidence of a strong culture of joining and doing things together, of a sense of community that can grow in both the physical and digital realm. But it is one that is different from before, that the traditional structures of political parties have not responded to. The union branch, the labour club, the constituency Labour party: these are no longer the places people go to associate and take collective action. So the challenge for parties of the left is whether they can join with the joiners, or whether they will remain a class apart.

Collaboration not control

So while the new political landscape offers great challenges for the left, there are opportunities to build a powerful new coalition – if social democratic parties are able to recognise them and respond. There is clear evidence of a deep democratic instinct, and new technologies are emerging all the time that make it much easier to bring people together around shared interests. What's more, in Britain, the political momentum behind devolution to our cities and counties presents creative space for the development of a more participatory politics; so too, perhaps, does an electoral system that is struggling to cope with the fracturing of two-party politics.

Perhaps the greatest opportunity lies in how social democrats respond to solving their hardest problem. The traditional political offer of mainstream parties of the left – of increased spending to improve public services during periods of economic growth – has been put out of reach by fiscal deficits and the reduced agency of central states. So social democrats have little option other than to use this moment to discover a new purpose and find a new language, that goes beyond an orthodox politics of tax and spend. The paradox for the left is that it will never be allowed to take control of the levers of the state until it convinces that this is not the entirety its political project.

For the Labour party, this will require a political tradition that is over a century old, with entrenched structures, mindset and assumptions, to change in some fairly fundamental ways. It will need to find the wherewithal to completely reinvent its culture and way of practising politics, at a time when it is at a historically low ebb. It must be viewed as an open question as to whether this is possible. But if it cannot, it seems likely that an institution that fundamentally changed the course of the 20th century will find itself redundant in the 21st.

Labouring on

At the crux of this lies Labour's instinct to control. The Labour party seeks to scoop up energy in support of electing Labour governments, who then aim to 'deliver Labour values' through the machinery of the state. But today's political culture is plural, non-deferential and non-bureaucratic, so the big question is whether a machine party with rigid structures built for another time can be flexible enough to meld with it. Instead of seeking to capture, Labour will need to learn to collaborate and combine: to work alongside the new forces of energy in society, to conjoin with them, but never try to co-opt them. This is made harder of course by the fact that those forces are mostly suspicious of the Labour party's motives and that Labour is seeking to build a relationship within a very shallow puddle of trust.

There are three ways Labour might look to begin rebuilding its relationship with the British people over the coming months and years.

The first is about tone. John Harris described the assets that set Jeremy Corbyn apart from his rivals last summer as "clarity, moral oomph and an evident sense of purpose." These are qualities that have not come easily to the special adviser generation who have led Labour politics in recent years. The key thing that is said to unite

those politicians who are successfully breaking through the white noise of professional politics is 'authenticity'. Authenticity is a slippery concept – you know it when you see it – and Labour's attempt to find more of it usually begins and ends with a call for more working class MPs. This would help, of course: our parliament should aspire as much as possible to look like the country it is supposed to represent. But it is not their class profile that defines the politicians we think of as being 'authentic': look at Boris Johnson, Nigel Farage or Donald Trump. What's more, in the Labour party, 'more working class MPs' tends to be mistranslated as 'more trade union officials', who in reality exist in much the same professional policy milieu as the rest of the political class. Research for the *Fabian Review* before the last election found that while Labour had selected fewer special advisers in its key seats, the growing number drawn from the third sector fed "a perception of a revolving door between Whitehall, Westminster and 'charity street'".

No, what authenticity means here is less about who you are and where you come from, and more about what you say and whether we believe you. This is particularly crucial for establishing trust with a generation of voters who are relentlessly marketed at and pitched to every waking moment. We know that the public's greatest bugbear about politicians is their refusal to 'give straight answers to straight questions'. So we need a Labour culture in Westminster that is able to speak clearly and convincingly about what it thinks and why – and is prepared to give honest 'don't knows' when it doesn't – rather than the torturous circumlocution and angle-playing of recent years. Good judgement, sound principles and the ability to inspire – rather than message discipline, policy expertise or facility with political chicanery – should be the key qualities we look for from our political candidates and leaders.

Second, Labour politicians must start to look beyond 'policy'. Policy has been Labour's modus operandi, to the exclusion of almost everything else. But research during the 2015 election campaign by BritainThinks showed the ultimate limits of this. A panel of swing voters tracked their day-to-day experiences of the election via a smartphone app – just one in five entries referred to policy, despite this being the entire focus of Labour's campaign. At the end of the campaign, when asked what the Conservatives stood for, the swing voters' answer was clear: they had a 'long-term economic plan'. For Labour this question was greeted by deafening silence or a rag-bag of micro measures, from zero-hours contracts to banning unpaid internships. After five years, the British people didn't know who the Labour party was or what it stood for.

The traditional tools of policymaking have been undermined, by the long shadow cast by the financial crisis on the public finances, the crisis of political trust, and the increasingly complex nature of social problems. What's more, as a political proposition, policy tends to divide more than it unites: it separates the political class from everyone else (*we* give *you* something) and pits one group of people against another (someone else isn't getting it). Labour's political challenge is so multifaceted that trying to find retail policy offers to appeal to each constituent part of an election-winning coalition will leave the party with a very confusing looking shopping basket, and heighten the sense that it doesn't stand for anything in particular.

Instead, the job of political leaders should be something else: to found institutions and inspire collective action. Rather than pulling levers, setting targets or repurposing budgets, we need politicians to do fewer, bigger things. We need our leaders to grapple with the big issues of the age that unite us all – whether that is integrating health and social care or creating a carbon neutral economy – and create institutions and co-ordinated systems that empower

and include. So when presented with a problem, the Labour movement should not first reach for a policy solution, but an organising one. This is particularly relevant at a time when Labour is out of power in Westminster. So, rather than hectoring that George Osborne's 'national living wage' isn't a real living wage, and promising that a future Labour government would go further to tackle low pay, local Labour parties could start making a difference tomorrow by joining with workplace living wage campaigns.

This leads to the third big task for Labour politics: to spend much more time building trusting relationships in particular places and communities. This insight was recognised during the last parliament when Arnie Graf, the US community organiser, was brought in to conduct a root and branch review of the party. The aim was to shift activity away from knocking on doors and depositing leaflets towards building community power. This was, however, quickly sidelined – which highlights Labour's cultural allergy towards an approach to politics that is about more than policy, and an approach to organising that is about more than clipboards and voter ID. Graf wrote last summer of his experience and observed that Labour's organisers spend so many hours on data collection, they have very little time to do what should be the most crucial aspect of their work: meeting new people and establishing new relationships. Graf recommends that half of all organisers should be freed up for the exclusive pursuit of this task. This would not only begin the slow process of getting to know the country again, Graf says "this work will lead to numerous local campaigns and show people that the Labour party is the place to go if you want to get things done." Showing rather than telling is crucial to winning back trust.

Through Arnie Graf's work, the Labour party seems to already have within its orbit a model of politics that

responds to the challenges of the age. Whether the party recognises this and acts upon it is a big test of whether it is capable of leading itself back to life. And if it is not, then this is what the new groups in the party that are emerging like Momentum and Labour Together should do. In this way they could try and harness the energies of the people who have joined the party in recent months and who will presumably quite quickly decide they have much better things to do with their time than sit and debate internal resolutions. Clearly there is also a huge leadership task here for Labour's local centres of power, as councils reinvent their role in the face of severe budgets cuts, away from a delivery model towards a convening one. Councillors are increasingly acting as 'community champions', leading citizens through the process of taking more responsibility rather than sitting in meetings to decide what things to do for them. Labour culture tends to look upwards for answers, to gaze longingly towards Westminster for a unified programme handed down by a heroic leader. Instead, it must look outwards: to the sources of strength that exist both within the Labour movement and beyond it, and humbly seek to build alliances with it.

EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE: DEMOCRACY

Is democracy dying? The increasing prevalence of abstentions, of invalid or blank votes; the ongoing decline of affiliation to parties and unions; the anti-political torrents released every day on social media: all these things seem to suggest that our parliamentary democracies are in a sorry state.

And as a matter of fact, they are. The spirit of democracy itself remains strong, however. By declining to vote, or voting for anti-establishment parties, disillusioned citizens are expressing their rejection of a power monopolised by a professionalised political class. Citizens' anger demonstrates the strength of their democratic convictions.

The left listen. We were born out of an outpouring of anger against a 'state power' concentrated in the hands of a few, confiscated by the 'power of money'. However, by participating in the exercise of power, we risk no longer embodying resistance to the establishment, but becoming part of it.

Other left-wing groups, born from anti-austerity movements, groups for the protection of tenants or consumers, and artists' collectives, are reinventing democratic practices, and rediscovering the ambitions that we had at the beginning. They are our allies by definition.

Let us have the courage to put our democratic convictions into practice, and draw lots for secondary chambers in our parliaments and our regional and local assemblies. Having citizens chosen by lot to form regularly elected assemblies can only reinvigorate the left. It forces elected representatives to enter into dialogue with citizens, just as doctors and educators are learning to collaborate with their increasingly informed patients and students. Their point of view can help to broaden ours, whilst our experience can enrich their civic culture – and remove the lure of populism through a respectful dialogue, showing the constraints of collective action as well as its force.

Paul Magnette

Discussion Guide: Future Left

How to use this Discussion Guide

The guide can be used in various ways by Fabian Local Societies, local political party meetings and trade union branches, student societies, NGOs and other groups.

- You might hold a discussion among local members or invite a guest speaker – for example, an MP, academic or local practitioner to lead a group discussion.
- Some different key themes are suggested. You might choose to spend 15–20 minutes on each area, or decide to focus the whole discussion on one of the issues for a more detailed discussion.

A discussion could address some or all of the following questions:

1. If the welfare state defined the 1945 Labour government, the 'white heat of technology' the 1964 Labour government and the New Labour project the 1997 government, what policies and political narrative should define the next Labour government?
2. In a world changing at dizzying pace, how can the left balance its desire for progressive social change with a respect for place, tradition and identity?
3. How can the left carve out a distinctive offer on public services in a time of immense resource constraints?

Please let us know what you think

Whatever view you take of the issues, we would very much like to hear about your discussion. Please send us a summary of your debate (perhaps 300 words) to debate@fabians.org.uk.

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FUTURE LEFT: CAN THE LEFT RESPOND TO A CHANGING SOCIETY?

Right across Europe, mainstream political parties are in retreat. New currents on left and right are confronting the political establishment, and forcing social democrats to face up to some existential questions. What does a fast-changing economy mean for political movements forged in the workplaces of the industrial age? Can traditional parties reinvent themselves for a more pluralist, less deferential democracy? How can the left nurture new forms of solidarity in a more individualistic society?

This collection of essays is a search for answers. It brings together Labour party politicians and UK and EU policy experts to map some of the long-term trends reshaping our society, our economy and our politics, and to consider their implications for the left. The project is guided by the spirit of the revisionist *New Fabian Essays*, which stressed in the early 1950s the imperative of each generation having "a new analysis of the political, economic and social scene as a basis for reformulating socialist principles".

←NEXT LEFT→

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