

FABIAN REVIEW

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UP OUR STREET



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Saturday 14 January 2017

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FABIAN REVIEW

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Apocalypse soon?

Labour needs to find a new cultural centre ground if it is to avoid disaster, writes *Andrew Harrop*

THE POLITICS OF 2016 may have been frenetic but now an uneasy calm has descended on the Labour party. The Corbynite left has won the big internal battles but it seems to have no roadmap for winning back lost voters. The rest of the parliamentary party is barely audible: in place of the sound and fury of Jeremy Corbyn's first 12 months, there is quietude, passivity and resignation. And on Brexit, the greatest political question for two generations, the party's position is muffled and inconsistent.

This is the calm of stalemate, of insignificance, even of looming death. Labour remains strong in urban pockets but is faring very badly in byelections. If the opinion polls are any guide, it could soon cease to be a nationally competitive political force. In Scotland there is no sign of recovery. And in England and Wales the party is barely matching the level it achieved at the 2010 election, even though mid-term polls normally favour Labour oppositions. Even if the party's numbers sink no further, at the next election it is on course for well under 200 seats for the first time since 1935.

Labour politicians need to do more to understand the nature of the threat. MPs in the British equivalent of America's 'rust belt' talk up the risk of Ukip. But Paul Nuttall will struggle to make inroads, as Labour majorities are mainly large where Ukip is a force. And whatever MPs' local anxieties, since 2010 Ukip has actually gained relatively few votes directly from Labour and is now losing supporters to the Conservatives. The greater threat is that Labour's Brexit supporters switch straight to the Tories, in marginal seats. Theresa May's simple electoral strategy is to be the party of Brexit and it is paying dividends, as the Sleaford and North Hykeham byelection proved.

The Conservatives won't mind that they are also losing some 'remain' voters, but for Labour there are no easy choices. The Tories and Ukip may be chasing Labour's 2 million leave voters. But the Liberal Democrats now have

their sights on the party's 5 million remainers, and in the recent byelections they've won plenty over. Since 2015 the polls indicate that Labour has lost greater numbers to 'remain' parties than to the right. So if the party apes May or Nuttall it could easily do more harm than good.

This dilemma means that Labour cannot allow others to define our politics as if split down the middle by a referendum vote. Scotland has proved where that leads. Labour MPs representing ex-industrial heartlands may feel that the country is severed in two when they see social conservatives at home and liberal urbanites in London. But, in truth, we are not a polarised nation of cosmopolitans and reactionaries. Instead, most people are somewhere in between, and that's especially the case in marginal constituencies.

To find a way back, Labour must therefore become the party of this cultural 'middle'. Tony Blair once tried to own the 'centre ground' of the left-right economic axis. Now the party's goal must be to dominate the centre of the newly dominant social/cultural axis that runs between Blair's liberal internationalism and Trump's social authoritarianism.

The party must plant its flag midway between these poles and seek to occupy as much space as possible, so that it can rebuild connections with people with all sorts of different backgrounds and worldviews, whatever they did at the referendum. In practice, that means starting with pavement politics in the suburbs and towns where Labour isn't winning, to show that the party is 'from here', not an unfamiliar somewhere else.

Labour needs to be the party for the millions of voters who were neither die-hard remainers nor leavers; neither Richmond Park global citizens nor Faragiste pub bores. For if it does not contest and win the centre of the 'cultural' axis then it will lose so many voters, of every complexion, that it will struggle to survive. We must not let the sun set on Labour. **F**

Shortcuts



PRESSURE POINTS

Growth in the south-east should not be at the expense of the 'just about managing' elsewhere

—Shaun Spiers

Everyone wants to rebalance the UK economy, to generate jobs and growth in the parts of the country that need them most. Or at least they are keen in theory and when they are making speeches about it. But in reality, public money is poured into the wealthiest, most vibrant parts of the country regardless of the cost to places that are (to coin a phrase) 'just about managing'.

And even when efforts are made to support parts of the country that are struggling, they are undermined because even more is done to stoke growth in places that are already doing well. The thinking seems to be that firms want to invest in booming areas; people want to live there (of course they do – that is where the jobs are); and that it is the job of government to anticipate and accommodate this growth.

So 'predict and provide' rules the day, whether in transport (build more roads to meet demand), housing (build homes 'where people want to live') or economic development (create more jobs where there are already jobs).

All this, we are told, helps 'UK plc'. But UK plc does not exist; it is a slogan, a category mistake. In reality, as has been endlessly discussed since Brexit, a growing economy does not necessarily benefit all parts of the country, and the places left behind may actively resent those that are doing well.

It is depressing when lazy clichés shape thinking, but the UK plc mindset is not new. I recall a Campaign to Protect Rural England seminar on rebalancing growth under the last Labour government. A minister representing a northern seat simply could not process the idea that if an overseas company offered to create 200 jobs in a part

of Surrey with full employment, a housing shortage and lots of green belt, it would be sensible (at the very least) to encourage it to invest elsewhere. That minister's view was that UK plc needed the jobs (even if Surrey did not) and that there was absolutely no point in trying to redirect the investment.

Ministers are now keen to show that Brexit Britain is 'open for business', which means new roads, new ports – the chancellor is keen to revive the proposal for a deepwater port at Dibden Bay in the New Forest – and, of course, a third runway at Heathrow.

From an environmental perspective, it is hard to know where to start with the third runway. More people are expected to die as a result of air pollution; carbon emissions will increase, as the government's committee on climate change has confirmed; and the new runway will damage the tranquillity of the Chilterns and the Kent and Sussex Weald.

It will also add to housing pressures in the south-east. A Treasury civil servant told me that the new runway would 'unlock' 80,000 jobs locally. What he meant was that homes will have to be found for an extra 80,000 people in an area of full employment, housing shortage and lousy air quality.

London's five airports already have 50 per cent more flights than New York or Tokyo. An expanded Heathrow will become the biggest airport in the world, sucking even more money and employment to the richest part of the country, and one of the most environmentally pressured. Some of this is spelt out in the Airports Commission's report, but it is viewed as a positive. The third runway, it says, will benefit an area stretching west of London through the Thames Valley into Oxfordshire, an area of high employment, low unemployment, but where "housing constraints... remain an issue".

Once again, 'just about managing' places will come second to the supposed economic interests of 'UK plc', and the most environmentally pressured areas will be pressured some more.

There are years of argument ahead. The third runway will be vigorously opposed by environmentalists and local residents, and my money is on them. But it would be good to think that we could avoid battles of this sort in future.

The Airports Commission said that expanding either Heathrow or Gatwick would fit well with existing spatial plans. But that is because England, unlike most developed countries, lacks any sort of national spatial plan. Perhaps it is time we had one, so that we can assess the consequences of decisions of this sort for the whole nation. **F**

Shaun Spiers is chief executive of the Campaign to Protect Rural England



UNITED FRONT

Devolution offers the best chance we have to integrate health and social care for those with dementia

—Hazel Blears

For the first time dementia has overtaken cancer and heart disease as the greatest single cause of death in the UK. More than 800,000 people are living with this terrible disease and the number is predicted to rise to more than a million by 2021.

Those stark statistics tell little of the story of the lives of people with dementia and their friends, carers and families as they struggle to come to terms with the changes in their physical and mental health, their bewilderment about what has happened and their fears for the future.

Dementia is a disease which affects almost every family, including my own, and yet until relatively recently it was rarely discussed, dramatically under-diagnosed, attracted tiny amounts of research funding and was subject to massive stigma.

Some of that, thankfully, has changed but there is still a long way to go to ensure that people with dementia can live stimulating and happy lives in the community and receive first-class health and social care support.

Dementia is a classic example of a condition which spans a huge range of public service responsibilities and so exposes the dysfunctionality of the very system that is supposed to care for people at this most vulnerable time of their lives.

People with dementia spend twice as long in hospital for the same condition as those without dementia, they are readmitted twice as often and disproportionately die in hospital rather than at home. All of that is damaging for the individuals and their families and it is also extremely costly.

Good health care is of course essential, but a hospital stay can be one of the most damaging events for people with dementia, reducing their independence, aggravating confusion and hastening physical and intellectual decline.

The divide between a nationally funded NHS and social care funded by local authorities has made it almost impossible for central government to create the much-heralded integrated system that would promote prevention, care and support and reduce the need for admission to residential and acute hospital care.

Devolution provides the best opportunity we have to integrate our commissioning and our provision for health and social care, to support people's independence and the ability to live satisfying lives with friends and families in the community they know and understand.

In Greater Manchester we have a devolved health and social care budget of £6.6bn. It sounds a lot but in reality we need around £8bn to stand still, so fundamental changes in what we do are essential.

We currently have about 30,000 people living with dementia across our 10 boroughs and spend £221m a year on their health and social care. By 2021 there will be 40,000 people and the costs will rise to £376m.

We have now established a bold and ambitious programme to transform services

over the next five years. We will drive up diagnosis rates and levels of community support, reduce avoidable admissions to hospital and residential care and provide excellent standardised care in hospital when it is needed.

Dementia United has brought together people with dementia and their families and those working across health, housing, social care, police, fire, and importantly social sector organisations which provide brilliant innovative services to improve the quality of people's lives.

We have five pledges in our programme: to improve the quality of the lived experience of people with dementia, their carers and families; to reduce the variation of commissioning across Greater Manchester; to have a common standard for post-diagnosis support; to co-produce and redesign health and care with people and their carers and to adopt new technology.

Throughout my time in government, we faced the constant challenge of transforming our system from one which prioritises acute treatment to one which expands upfront support and prevention in the community.

The usual explanation for failure to achieve this is that there is never enough funding to do 'double running' – ie to support both parts of the system while the necessary shift of resources takes place.

This is where I believe social investment can play a part in supporting change. We can bring in funds to significantly scale up community support and activities such as exercise, music, art, gardening and befriending – all areas where there is growing evidence of their value in improving cognitive health and slowing the acceleration of dementia. We can then track the reduction in excess bed days spent in the acute sector and use the savings achieved to repay the social investment.

It sounds simple but we need to continue to develop the metrics and modelling to demonstrate that our approach works and we have been working with commissioners over the last 18 months to make it happen.

All of this matters to the thousands of families living every day with dementia. Until a cure can be found we must redouble our efforts to help people to live safe, fulfilling and stimulating lives with their carers, families and friends, supported by a system which genuinely works with them. **F**

Hazel Blears is a trustee of the Alzheimer's Society and chair of Salford University's Institute for Dementia. She was Salford's MP between 1997 and 2015 and held a number of ministerial roles



A POLITICAL EARTHQUAKE

Hillary Clinton's failure to win over working-class voters holds a message for Labour

—Rowenna Davis

A political earthquake. That's the metaphor that stuck. New fault lines tore up the most powerful country on the planet on November 8, as the institutions of the left crumpled and collapsed. Millions of Democrats are still confusedly picking amongst the dust and rubble. Why wasn't our side strong enough to withstand such a blow? And what lessons can we salvage from the carnage?

The left was quick to blame a biased media and voter ignorance. But the side I was angriest at was our own. The results, which showed an unprecedented drop-off in white working-class voters for the Democrats, mirrored that party's priorities. Somewhere along the way, the Clinton campaign consciously decided that it didn't need the traditional white working-class base that had scaffolded its victories in places like Wisconsin and Michigan for so long: the US had become so urbanised and multicultural that it could do without them.

Perhaps it was the influence of Bernie Sanders, but during the debates, Clinton's messaging – from policing and climate change to health care – was precisely targeted at women, young people and ethnic minorities. White working-class people weren't given a look-in; the challenges of immigration and personal responsibility which matter on the shop floor were sidestepped in favour of rhetoric about "the last glass ceiling".

The disdain for working-class people was shown most strongly in September, when Hillary Clinton labelled half of Trump supporters "deplorables", a line that had ugly echoes of Gordon Brown's "bigoted woman" comments in 2010. In both cases, the comments – which focused on people rather than their views – seemed to reveal what the establishment really felt about those who opposed them. This is about more than a strategic error which loses votes: it's



a moral point about how we should treat one another.

You could see blue collar areas being deprioritised out in the field too. This is why Hillary failed to show up in Wisconsin, taking it for granted and losing the state. She lost too in the state she grew up in, Pennsylvania, where traditional voters left the Democrats in droves. Obama's former faith adviser Michael Wear, a major opponent of Trump, said that he felt Clinton had "almost complete disregard" for engaging faith communities, particularly white Catholics and Evangelical church groups. The Democrats' slogan might have been "stronger together" but the organisation and the policy clearly said: "we can win apart".

But surely we can't be expected to pander to racists? That's what many on the left ask when faced with this argument. I'm worried that the question itself is part of the problem. Of course among those who voted Republican there will be some racists – just like there are among Ukip voters – but when half the electorate is voting that way, do you really want to brand them all with that label? The left can win and reject racists; it can't win and dismiss millions of its former supporters, many of whom backed Obama, as "deplorable".

We're all quick to jump on what America's experience can teach the UK. Corbyn believes that he can win like Trump because he too is anti-establishment, movement-led and highly critical of the current state of the economy. He hopes to ride the anti-establishment wave, but use it for good instead of evil. But my concern is that the Corbynite brand of anti-establishment politics – focused on issues peripheral or even hostile to the experiences of many potential voters; wishing we could abolish the monarchy, unilateral nuclear disarmament, criticising the profit motive, and so on – do not reflect the changes that the voters want to see in the system.

Next to Trump, Corbyn is still going to look like another polite, well-spoken man in a suit. Because the truth is that Corbyn is closer to Clinton. Like her, he looks to have decided to run on a coalition of graduates, ethnic minorities and young people. He seems to believe that people who say they are concerned about immigration or personal responsibility or taxes are actually suffering from a kind of false consciousness, that their concerns can be completely solved through state funds, and that he knows better than they do what they really need.

And, like Clinton, Corbyn expects young people and ethnic minorities to vote left simply because of their demographic

grouping. Yet we get annoyed when white working-class people do the same and line up behind a right-wing alternative, be it the Republican party or Ukip.

So what can we do? At a national level, Labour has to do more than listen to blue-collar concerns. We need more leaders from these backgrounds and more action taken to enact what they are telling us. On a personal level, let's not write people off for having a different political opinion from our own. Don't shut down when someone says they voted for Brexit; open up. Don't de-friend someone on Facebook for saying they are worried about immigration, ask them why. Of course we should always challenge what we disagree with – but don't disengage. A bit less self-righteousness and a little more humility are crucial to helping us rebuild. ■

Rowenna Davis is a teacher and author of the book Tangled up in Blue. She was Labour's parliamentary candidate for Southampton Itchen in 2015. For more on the US election aftermath, see pages 20–23



SURVIVING THE SPLIT

Don't let the EU divorce break up the family of the left

—Richard Corbett

The referendum result was a bit of a relationship breaker. Not only were we to proceed with a messy divorce from the EU, but the result laid bare some painful splits in the relationship between politicians, workmates, neighbours – even families.

But what of the European political family of the left? How will it survive the break-up? The initial reaction from our socialist parliamentary colleagues was what psychologists would probably see as a normal reaction to people experiencing significant emotional trauma. Not quite knowing what to say the first time you meet. The awkward silence as you share a lift. In politics, we have all probably encountered this when we lose an election. This time though, that mood of sympathy – already shown to Labour MEPs after the 2015 general election – was deeper. This

was a collective loss and consequently a collective emotional trauma. Our colleagues both wanted to support us and be supported themselves.

It's true that this dark mood was punctuated by some angry reactions from within our own family. As in many divorce situations, there were recriminations, and there were calls, fortunately only from a minority, for British members to lose their positions and their say on many key issues with immediate effect.

When we returned to Brussels in September, we started the new parliamentary year a few steps back from where we left, partly because of Labour's own lack of clarity in our response to the referendum result and partly because our leadership contest had the party talking to itself, not looking outward. Then along came the new prime minister seemingly intent on secret negotiations and a 'hard Brexit'. The impact of her Conservative party conference speech on our socialist colleagues was like a red rag to a bull.

Not just on MEPs. Comments made by our colleagues in government across the EU, like Joseph Muscat – Malta's Labour prime minister who will hold the presidency of the EU Council when we invoke article 50 – made it clear that the 'be gentle with the British' mood had not lasted. Negotiations for Brexit would, he said, be like they were for the Greek bailouts – tough. For the left members of the European Council, there is no public appetite for a special deal for Britain, nor for an easy negotiation process.

What does all this mean for future relations between us and the European left? What can we expect from now until article 50 is invoked and from then on?

Within the parliament, there is a commitment from our political group, the Socialists & Democrats, for British Labour members to retain their current committee positions. Many continental colleagues of course ask whether we are fighting Brexit, pointing out that it was an advisory referendum, won by a narrow majority, on the basis of a pack of lies, with a questionable franchise (they have heard the protests from Brits living in their countries who could not vote). They have heard Nigel Farage, when he thought he'd lose, saying that 52–48 settles nothing. They hope that, as the consequences of Brexit become more apparent, Britain might think again. They would welcome that.

Beyond the European parliament, there are positive developments at the level of the Party of European Socialists, which brings together our parties not just the MEPs. Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has put significant effort into attending its

meetings in Brussels and elsewhere. While domestically Labour may struggle to have much influence on the government's negotiating strategy, fulsome and genuine engagement with the eight sister parties who lead governments, and therefore sit in the European Council, and the further half dozen who have leading ministers in coalitions (all of whom will have a say on the British deal), is the best hope we have that Labour values will form part of the negotiation and Jeremy should be credited for this work. Leaving the European Union does not mean that we leave this crucial group of socialist parties in Europe. The Norwegian Labour party, for example, is a full and active member, despite Norway not being an EU member.

There is much work for us to do with our sister parties. We have often been cast as the reluctant partner, even within our own political family. I believe the cooperation and solidarity that does exist can be built on fuller and richer commitment by us if we are to have a shared future outside the European Union. In particular, the party leadership, NEC and MPs will have to invest greater effort into this relationship when there are no longer any British Labour MEPs. Jeremy Corbyn's appointment of Rosie Winterton as an envoy to our sister parties is a useful preparation and a conference in London in February with our sister parties will be an opportunity to see how this can be taken further.

Let's ensure that if we do go ahead with our divorce from the EU, it will not mean the end of the relationship. ■

Richard Corbett is a Labour MEP for Yorkshire and the Humber. He is deputy leader of the European Parliamentary Labour party, interim chair of the UK European Movement and chair in the European Parliament of the Labour Movement for Europe



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SOLID FOUNDATIONS

Sure Start was one of Labour's great achievements. The party now has a chance to build on its success with a renewed vision for the early years —*Octavia Holland*

Mention the words 'Sure Start' to any Labour party member and they're likely to lament the wonderful achievements of this national early years' revolution. The buzz around Sure Start was palpable; it was a hugely popular programme. From the birth of the first centres in 1999 through to extensive ongoing rollout which continued until 2010, it became a sign of prosperity, of achievement for all – a programme of real regeneration. Visiting some of the pro-

A key tenet of the Sure Start programme was that its universal appeal would attract a mix of families

grammes in the north-east in 2002, in some of the most deprived parts of the country, I heard parents raving about how their children were finally getting the support they had never had, how it was changing their community and the relationships they had with each other for the better. It was an emblem of our commitment as a country to give the worse off a chance, to break intergenerational disadvantage and nurture social mobility. Many described it as one of New Labour's greatest achievements.

The decline of the programme has been stark but it's been slow and steady. There have been no major announcements or policy changes, just vague commitments to consult which never materialise. The role of Sure Start children's centres is set out in a national 'core purpose' and underpinned by an Ofsted inspection framework; delays to the consultation have resulted in neither document being updated and both are now considered as out of date and unfit for purpose, leaving the sector in limbo and at further risk of decline. In the meantime

more than 800 of the 3,000 Sure Start children's centres have closed and the budget cuts have been extensive (for example, 2015 saw a £125m drop). Local authorities have the added pressure of delivering on the government's free childcare offers and it seems that faced with the daunting task of balancing the budget children's centres are getting knocked down the list. Notably, the all-party parliamentary group on children's centres was formally closed in November 2016, following the closure of children's charity 4Children, a further blow to the opposition to the loss of the centres, which has been fragmented and uncoordinated.

So how did this flagship policy end up being sidelined to the extent that there is now no protection, accountability or national direction for the programme? If you ask professionals and policy makers beyond those who feel a particular allegiance to it, the response is varied. For some, it's the expense of the programme, for others the lack of evidence that some of its services were delivered effectively, but the most common criticism seems to be that Sure Start was available to everyone, not just the poor and those in need. These criticisms mask the huge achievements and wide-spread success of the programme.

First, the cost needs to be considered against the cost of not intervening early, which the Early Intervention Foundation prices at £16.6bn. Second, an Oxford University study showed the clear benefits of the programme and even though it may have not engaged with the very hardest to reach, it certainly provided huge support for many disadvantaged families. And third, a key tenet of the Sure Start programme was that its universal appeal would attract a mix of families, providing a non-stigmatised service that would be popular with everyone. Sure Start, at its best, was a universal but targeted programme – to criticise the principle of universality is to criticise the principle which should be at the heart of any sustainable early years strategy.

There is a real opportunity here; with the exposure of the government's troubled families programme as failing and the fading of its life chances strategy, there is a vacuum of vision. The Labour party should set out clear plans for a renewed under-fives strategy. It should incorporate the existing free childcare offers but also extend to a harder to reach group, providing support to those who may not otherwise engage.

Local children's networks should be established to focus on the first 1,000 days (from pregnancy through to two years) and deliver services from a menu

of evidence-based interventions, assessed through national organisations like the Early Endowment Foundation and Early Intervention Foundation. Although limited services should be offered for the two-to-fives, the focus for this age group should be on signposting, improving the quality of the childcare in the area and joining up services. The local children's networks should deliver services based on local needs and should lead to peer-to-peer support, which can then sustain itself as the children move in to free childcare. The networks will not always require one specific building and could operate from a variety of settings including libraries, halls, GP surgeries, hospitals and schools.

Through a sharper, more focused, evidence-based approach which supports parents and children in the first 1,000 days, the Labour party could demonstrate fresh thinking, with a sustainable programme which would make huge long-term savings. **F**

Octavia Holland is director of the Communication Trust, a coalition of not-for-profit organisations supporting young people with their speech, language and communication



SUPPORT SYSTEM

The left needs to stop lecturing British Muslim women

—Shaista Aziz

Post-Brexit, hate crime has soared. But while the political discourse around austerity, immigration and the refugee crisis has created an environment where growing numbers of people seem to feel they can be openly racist, it's important to be clear: racism never went away.

Over the years, British Muslim communities have all too often been the targets for racist abuse – and worse. But for British Muslim women, particularly those who choose to wear clothing that identifies them as Muslim, the problem has become particularly acute.

Visible Muslim women wearing the hijab

often bear the brunt of hate crime, abuse and discrimination. And the underbelly of this abuse is rooted in misogyny. There have been some horrific incidents, including the recent case of a pregnant Muslim woman, wearing a hijab, who was attacked in the car park of a supermarket in Milton Keynes. She was kicked in the stomach and later miscarried.

As a British Muslim woman who wears a hijab I've faced a number of incidents of gendered Islamophobia, from sexual harassment in the office based on my Muslim identity, to being verbally and physically abused on the street. I've contacted the police three times in the past 18 months to report racist hate crime against me. In the most recent incident, less than six months ago, I was standing at a bus stop in my home city of Oxford after returning from a work trip to Prague. A white man saw me approaching and became visibly agitated. He swore at me and lurched towards me with his fist raised so I had to use my suitcase as a barrier between me and him. Although other people were at the bus stop at the time, nobody intervened.

As I told the police, I believe it is Muslim women's visibility – as women who are deemed 'other' – that is a common thread in such attacks. Islamophobes and misogynists do not want women like me to be visible. Just as we are attacked by those who feel we do not belong to the 'us', so we can become targets for some of 'our own men' for being too visible.

Significantly, though, we also face a further problem – and that's the lack of support we often feel from those who campaign for equality. As a non-white woman, a working-class woman, a Muslim woman and a feminist, I believe it is time to face up to the fact: Islamophobia is a feminist issue. But many on the left who advocate gender equality have been unwilling to show solidarity with women who are being victimised based on their identity and what they choose to wear. Why?

In the main, I think, it's because many, including mainstream white feminists, feel we Muslim women must be 'saved' from oppression and from the misogyny we are perceived to internalise by choosing to wear a hijab. In short, we must be saved from ourselves. If we're not to be loathed by the racists, we're to be pitied as the eternal victim and looked down on.

I am constantly lectured by people, both men and women, who tell me that Islam is one of the greatest threats to gender equality in the world. 'Over there' they tell me, 'in those Arab counties you would have no



© Mike Prince

rights'. No faith should be above criticism: all of us should be able to critique faiths or cultures and the dangerous and damaging patriarchy within. But reductive statements about how all Muslim women are victims of oppression are firmly rooted in orientalism and colonialism. They associate the hijab only with oppression rather than seeing Muslim women as individuals, as women and human beings with agency, with our own stories which we shape and determine ourselves.

Because I wear a hijab, many men and women who claim to be staunch feminists tell me that my feminism is negated. Yet across the world there is a growing awareness that feminism means different things to different communities. This acknowledgment of a new and diverse feminism is welcome. But it needs to be accompanied by a fresh examination of how class, race, religion and disability impact on women's lives and their rights – in other words an acknowledgment of intersectionality.

If we on the left are serious about equality and dismantling structures of oppression, we must acknowledge the deep-seated oppression women of colour, lesbian, transsexual and bisexual and non-binary women face just as we must acknowledge class and disability-based oppression. Otherwise our notion of equality is worthless in a world that is becoming more unequal and oppressive towards all marginalised women. **F**

Shaista Aziz is a freelance journalist, a committee member of the Oxford Fabian Society and a participant in the Fabian Women's Network 2016 mentoring programme

Power to the people

If we want to show how Labour can make a lasting difference to lives, we need to look to the local, writes *Jim McMahon*



Jim McMahon is MP for Oldham West and Royton and shadow minister for local government and devolution. He is an Oldham councillor

WE KNOW THE power of people because we see it every day in our own communities. But too often people feel powerless to effect change in their lives because of the centralist way the political system works.

Labour can realise its ambition and be true to its core values by working to shift power from the privileged few and hand it to the many. However, to do so effectively we must get our house in order. We need to agree a compelling new settlement and give a greater voice to the people we came into politics to represent.

I've been in parliament for approaching a year and now take responsibility for local government and devolution. It's a role I relish and my sound grounding in local government will, I hope, help to shape a future offer for Labour. As a councillor for 13 years, the former leader of a large co-operative council and member of one of the most developed combined authorities, I have seen first-hand the difference that can be made by people like me and my neighbours coming together to make our community a better place.

Our work at a local and regional level should offer a platform for Labour to demonstrate what it can do in power. We should not see it as providing temporary cover while we wait to improve our position nationally; instead we should see it as an opportunity to rewrite the rules of the game completely.

I am proud of the difference I made as a council leader in Oldham. We did a lot to change the council not simply because budget cuts dictated so, but because we realised that to be accepted as shaping the future of our community, we had to win hearts and minds too. The tired model of command and control doesn't work between central and local government and the same is true of local government and our communities.

And if the Conservative government claiming devolution and localism as their own wasn't encouragement enough to take the lead on shifting power to our communities, we

must also face the reality of Brexit. That includes taking a good look at where power sits, who makes the decisions and in whose interest those decisions are made.

Our communities have paid the real price of austerity and a financial crisis not of their making. The foundations of our society, built on good quality decent public services, have been undermined. As demand for children's safeguarding and adult social care services grows, the shrinking budgets of our councils have meant that difficult decisions have had to be made.

Step forward Labour local government. Our local councils have always done great things. Creativity and innovation are the watchwords of localists. Even in a restrictive, centralising environment with less and less funding available, when it would be understandable to keep heads down and focus on managing decline, we have instead seen an inspiring spirit of enterprise.

And it hasn't been small scale. Across the UK, 24 Labour-established fairness commissions have put Labour values at the heart of recovery. While the government chips away at the foundations of a fair society, it is Labour locally which is giving local people the protection they need. But more than that, up and down the country, jobs have been created, homes provided both to tenants and new homeowners and even in difficult times councils, particularly Labour councils, are leading the way and paying a real living wage. They have done this with one hand tied behind their backs. Much, much more could be done if we unleash the potential of our local government base.

When Whitehall was busy writing papers on reform and employing more researchers to explain away the real problems faced by our communities, local government has modernised at a rate which would make the SW1 crowd lightheaded.

Of course it isn't right to write off Westminster and national politics as irrelevant. Members of parliament represent the same constituents as councillors and elected

mayors do. Collectively, we set out our vision for a Labour Britain and when in government we are held to account to realise it. Even in opposition, we are duty bound to honour our vision and try to keep the government of the day as close to it as we can.

But power held tightly at the centre won't achieve the change we demand for our communities. The scale of the problems we need to address is huge. We have seen rising inequality, as the problem of stubbornly low skills in the workforce has been coupled with weak local economies. Tackling this skills crisis should be central to our offer at a local and regional as well as a national level because we know how important it is for the next generation to have better life chances than the one before.

Then there's housing. Successive governments haven't built the homes we need and, as a result, we are spending billions in housing benefit to private landlords for often sub-standard accommodation. There is a role for the private sector here of course, but the lack of choice for people who need a genuinely affordable home has meant tenants are being exploited. And although some councils are doing their utmost to get new homes built, they need new freedoms, powers and access to funding to make a real dent in the housing crisis.

There's much to do then, but in any discussion on devolution we must be open to the opportunities as well as the challenges. Rather than seeing devolution simply as a transfer of responsibilities, we ought to see it as an opportunity to redefine how we govern, how we grow our economies and how we deliver the best possible public services.

For if we don't, the status quo will fail many. Put simply, it's just not affordable. Our ageing population will mean an ever-increasing demand for services: by 2030 there will be a 51 per cent rise in the number of over-65s, compared with 2010. And those living longer will face significant challenges, with an estimated 80 per cent rise over the same period in those predicted to suffer from dementia.

Closer to hand, NHS England estimates that there will be a health funding shortfall of £30bn in just four years unless our approach changes. Local government will face a funding gap of nearly £6bn in adult and social care alone by 2020, according to the Local Government Association.

So where do we go from here? Examples from my home town give some pointers. In Oldham, the council has stepped in to fill the gap which existed in services to get people into work because national contracted providers were not meeting need. The council does not receive any central government funding for this work but decided it was not willing to sit back while so many fell through the net. So it set up its own organisation called Get Oldham Working. In just two years, more than 3,000 people have been helped into work and a genuine partnership has been created with businesses, community organisations and public services working together.

When BHS closed and the shutters came down as Sir Philip Green sailed off into the sunset, it was thanks to Get Oldham Working that every employee who wanted a new job had one lined up.

But Oldham also knows to let go when other arrangements might be a better option and this was evident in the establishment of the Action Oldham Fund. It benefited from a transfer of charitable trusts and historic dowries held by the council, creating a fund of almost £1m for local groups to invest in long-term sustainable support for great community projects.

There is evidence elsewhere of councils showing how local interventions can work. In Leeds, Bradford and Wakefield, local authorities supported 57 per cent of young people into work or learning compared against just 27 per cent for those supported by the Youth Contract.

Even more could have been done with greater control over welfare, transport and skills.

Aside from the crisis of public services and local economies, there is a crisis in our politics too – and there is almost certainly a link between the two. The EU referendum has brought us much to reflect on. People are fed up of having things done to them and of being let down by a system that isn't designed for their benefit. They are sick of fighting for scarce resources and as much as the Conservatives have been successful at turning the poor on the poor, much of the blame is

being placed on established politics.

This crisis in our politics has certainly excited the SNP which is pushing for a return to the ballot box for another Scottish referendum. With public support not in line with this demand, it is likely to be more of a negotiating position for further devolution of powers and fiscal autonomy.

As this push for more devolution continues, we must accept that the debate on how we govern and where power sits is evolving. We must accept too that if devolving power is good enough for Scotland and Wales, then it's good enough for England too.

But rather than starting with new structures and positions, it is far better that we build on the established, tried and tested building blocks of local government. The real focus in devolving power to the local level should be values-driven. Our approach needs to be about local government putting grassroots community organisations at the heart of decision-making, supported by fair funding based on need with local government holding the ring on public services.

Not only would more power at a local level bring better decision-making, tailored public services and a more efficient use of money, but on top of that we could show the public that we've heard their message about politics and their lives loud and clear. People want control to determine their futures and those of their children and grandchildren. They don't want things done to them nor are they willing to accept waiting patiently for a better tomorrow that for many simply doesn't come. Let's own it. Let's give power to the people. ■

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Up our street

A truly federal Britain, built on the assets of our communities, offers a fresh vision for Labour, says *Sarah Hayward*



Sarah Hayward is leader of Camden council

A HEAD OF LAST month's autumn statement, a member of Labour's frontbench wrote to councillors about how it must be soul-destroying to try to deliver services on an ever-shrinking budget. Never has one email so encapsulated the gulf between our parliamentary party and the vital work of Labour's councils. And we urgently need to bridge that gap.

Don't get me wrong: the period since 2010 has been the most difficult time for local government bar none. Every councillor I know has had very great difficulty with some aspects of what they are being asked to do. The depth of the cuts and the impact of the policy landscape, such as the massive assault on social housing, are more far reaching than anything Thatcher ever dreamed of in the 1980s.

But that makes my sense of purpose and resolve to do things differently stronger not weaker.

In the face of this ideological assault on public services, it has never been more important to have Labour in government in communities up and down the country demonstrating that there is no economic imperative to austerity. Austerity needn't be the 'given' of our times. Taking it on is not soul-destroying; it is the start of Labour's fightback.

I'm not arguing that Labour local government has all the answers. Certainly Brexit and the rise of politicians like Trump, Le Pen and Wilders pose some soul-searching and challenging questions.

But at a community level, we are able to demonstrate that there is an alternative. And many of the communities where we run the council are the same communities which feel disempowered by national and global trends. Those communities which feel powerless even to influence, never mind control, the changing world around them. Our councils offer a huge opportunity for our national Labour party if only those in power could see past the idea that governing in difficult times is soul-destroying.

If you go into politics to change people's lives for the better, then governing is the only thing that counts. Not

only for what you are able to deliver, even under the shadow of Tory austerity, but also for what you are able to prevent. We're not able to reverse every bad Conservative policy, but we are able to block or mitigate some. And that makes a big difference.

In my local authority, Camden, Labour is not cowed by a Conservative government; we're fighting it. Since 2010, we have become one of the nation's largest builders of council housing. We pay the living wage to all our staff. The staff of all our contractors will receive it before our term ends in 2018. We've put young people in charge of designing services to improve their mental health. When the Conservatives cut the Building Schools for the Future programme, we found a way to use our assets to generate more than £100m worth of investment in our school buildings, including building brand new schools in our most deprived areas. And we didn't cut funding for domestic violence services, we increased it.

This is just a small flavour of our achievements over the last six years, and there will be more to come. I've been humbled to meet people whose lives have been transformed or just made a little bit easier, because of the work we've done. The former teenage mum who got her first full time job in her late 20s because we developed an apprenticeship scheme – with childcare support – for over-25s. The families who have housing as a result of our building programme. The care workers who are now paid for travel time as well as their care appointments. These moments are not soul-destroying. They are what I got into politics for. And I can say hand on heart that none of this would have happened if the Conservatives ran Camden under a Tory government. I know this because I can see what Conservative councils are doing up and down the country.

The backdrop of austerity and rapidly changing demographics means we have to be genuinely innovative and ambitious to be able to achieve. Evolving technology and



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changing patterns of work and changing aspirations mean we have had to adapt.

That doesn't mean we have let go of our core principles. Our mission is to ensure that Camden is a place where everyone can succeed and no one is left behind. We put tackling inequality at the heart of everything we do. The backdrop means we're looking for new or different levers with which to do it. But we are ambitious for our communities and the people we were elected to serve.

We are lucky in Camden. We have incredible resources in our businesses, local communities, tenants and trade union organisations. And we have been able to use some of this resource to deliver our agenda. But every area in the country will have assets it can draw on if you can develop a common purpose that inspires people.

We are reaching into every area of public services too. There is no room for the police and health and councils and justice and transport to guard their own little fiefdoms any more. We can do better and more by working together. Greater integration on everything from mental health to IT services means that we are able to mount a much more robust defence of the public sector and its worth than we would be able to alone. We are able to give political voice to services that traditionally have no local political champion.

This too is a huge opportunity for Labour nationally. Ever since Osborne flatfooted us with his northern powerhouse talk early in the coalition government we have not managed to get to grips with what Labour's plans for devolution should be. Indeed in some quarters we appear to still be debating whether or not there should be devolution at all. But greater devolution gives great power to greater numbers of people. Isn't this what Labour is supposed to be about, taking power from the few and giving it to the

many? Well thought-out devolution plans could transform, and in some cases save, our cherished public services.

Take healthcare. I know and understand the fears about a devolved National Health Service. But those that worry about a 'Swiss cheese service' miss the point: this is exactly what we already have. We just pretend that we don't. Local commissioners, accountable to Whitehall more than local communities, make decisions based on budgets and local needs. There are already huge variations in the availability of treatments and services. No one I know argues that, for example, the legal right to abortion should be able to be fettered by local decision-makers. But there is already a real inequality in how long you have to wait for that service dependent on where you live. Shutting your eyes to devolution doesn't change this fact, and it does a disservice to those seeking treatments in areas where their need is met by long delays.

Even within the current arrangements, we've managed to work with local commissioners and health providers on issues as diverse as childhood obesity, perinatal mental health and reducing unnecessary hospital stays by those needing adult social care services. The latter is a growing national crisis that we in Camden are currently able to manage. If we had more powers, and more responsibility, we could do more.

Labour needs to look at the real achievements of its local councils and work out how a Labour government would set them free to do more. A real federal Britain could enable nationally mandated standards on key issues like wages, health and safety and healthcare access. But it would also set local communities free to be ambitious and creative with their local assets to meet local needs. Now that really would enable people and communities to take back control. **F**

A new statecraft

Devolution offers a real opportunity to reconnect with the 'left behind' who are alienated from our democratic institutions. But approaches so far have fallen short, as *Jessica Studdert* explains



Jessica Studdert is deputy director of the New Local Government Network

WE HAVE HAD a lot of democracy this year. The results of national polls on both sides of the Atlantic have confounded experts and rocked political establishments. The Brexit vote, and Donald Trump's "Brexit plus plus plus", revealed deep fault lines between those who broadly accept the governance status quo, and those who reject it: with the latter winning out.

The background context in the year running up to the EU referendum – although people could be forgiven for not noticing that it was happening – was a significant devolution drive within England. Yet while alienation from the distant 'elites' in governing institutions at Westminster and Brussels is a widely perceived problem, devolution of decision-making power to local government is far from being the solution with popular appeal. The 'take back control' message we heard during the referendum campaign chimed with many people, as mainstream national public discourse jarred with their perceived lived and local reality. This disconnect has been played out clearly in the corrosive debate on immigration, where national statistics or macro-economic arguments don't seem to hold weight when the community impact of immigration is highly localised.

So, rather than being a technocratic policy objective which runs parallel to but separate from people's real-life concerns, how can devolution become a route to re-engaging those alienated from national democratic institutions? Can local governance, closer to people and anchored in places, fill the vacuum for those who feel they have been left behind?

Two related forces are creating pressure on the health of our democracy: the demise of the expert and the rise of populism. Representative democracy relies on the legitimacy of individuals and institutions who form part of the decision-making process. The declining influence of experts on democratic opinion is symbolic of weakening trust in traditional institutions to take decisions in the best interests of people. There was widespread consternation

amongst remain supporters that the Sunderland electorate had voted leave. Why would they vote against their perceived rational self-interest as the home of the Nissan plant which risked relocation under Brexit? And why would the people of Cornwall, beneficiaries of so much European funding, turn their backs on that investment? The answer has to be that people are not simply two dimensional socio-economic units who act according to an evidence-based framework. Instead, the role of values and identity are just as important motivational factors, and we need to understand rather than downplay their significance.

The rise of populism as a force in our political system demonstrates the importance of these more emotive tribal factors which trump 'rationalism'. Populism challenges the basis upon which representative democracy, with the primacy of collective decision-making, is conducted. Populist narratives fuse socio-economic grievance with external cultural threats to explain changes which create insecurity, counter-posing 'out-of-touch elites' against the interests of 'the people'. They provide simplistic solutions and scapegoats where there are complexities. By seeking to change the terms of public policy debate, populists reinforce fragmentation and make it harder for representative democratic governance to function effectively in a pluralistic society.

These two forces – the decline of the expert and the rise of populism – combined with dramatic consequence in the EU referendum. The resonance of the 'take back control' slogan reflected the alienation of many from remote decision-making processes. In the context of globalisation, it is not the term 'inequality' (a socio-economic phenomenon) which chimed, but 'immigration' (with the implicit cultural threat it represents). And it's the latter which has become a byword for the shifts that are leaving people behind.

The ramifications of the vote present challenges for all of the institutions that underpin our representative democracy. Parliament, political parties and the High Court have

all felt shockwaves. Local government is not immune, yet there is a specific challenge for this institution of governance. Despite the significant discontent across the country with the 'out of touch' Westminster establishment, this angry sentiment has not translated from simple opposition into a popular positive movement for decision-making power to be repatriated locally.

On one level, this is because populists offer simplistic narratives and scapegoats rather than constructive institutional responses. But for those who would see the potential of a more devolved form of governance to be more legitimate in principle, overcoming this disconnect in practice is important. The Brexit vote laid bare the geographic fault lines within our country, between urban and rural, north and south, former industrial areas and metropolitan centres. How can our institutions of governance be more responsive to this localised variation? How can local government become part of the answer?

The government's devolution policy has been pursued within this increasingly fraught democratic context, the government's devolution model has adopted a deal model: new powers in return for councils forming combined authorities and agreeing to a directly elected mayor. There is evidence that the public are broadly open to devolving power in theory, but are less certain about the particular approach adopted.

Polling for the New Local Government Network and PwC undertaken by Ipsos Mori at the height of the deal process last year found that a net positive of 32 per cent of people supported the principle of devolving decision-making powers over things like economic development, housing and transport. Nearly two-thirds said that local politicians know better than national politicians what is best for their local area.

But at the same time, there was little recognition of the devolution process that was happening around them. Only 20 per cent of people living in the 38 areas that submitted devolution bids knew "a great deal" or "a fair amount" about the proposals which were supposed to be of direct benefit to their area. Three-quarters of people knew "just a little" or "nothing".

These findings suggest that people understand the potential of devolution to create more relevant decision-making, but the way it has been approached to date has fallen short. For devolution to offer a genuine opportunity to engage people who feel left behind and to create local institutions of governance capable of meeting the challenges of our times, we need to be clearer about the end goals.

So how do we move forward? Firstly, devolution to date has been driven by process not principle. This needs to be reversed if people are genuinely to engage with it. A model based on fast-tracked negotiated deals behind closed doors lacks transparency and has created little space for local dialogue with people about what devolved powers would mean for their lives. The government has retained tight control of what is on the table and the public have been almost completely shut out of the process. Short formal consultations were a mandated part of the process but they received few responses and the democracy bit has been bolted on afterwards through the mayoral elections.

Secondly, as a consequence, the opportunity for devolution to create a new relationship between the citizen and

the state has been missed. Beyond a vote every four years, new more empowered local governance could encourage a deeper ongoing democratic discussion that is more relevant for our networked age. But there is a risk that devolution as currently planned will simply recreate the same centralised structures writ small, still operating at a remove from people.

Local institutions are part of and reflective of the local culture and identity of their communities. There should be greater scope for local government to pursue more innovative ways of involving people more actively and systematically in decisions which affect their lives. A series of democratic mechanisms could be put in place to engage people in discussions about the future of their place. For example, citizens' juries could be used to bring people together to deliberate over complex issues and inform future priorities in their area. Digital technology could be used more imaginatively to crowd source ideas or responses to challenges. New mayoral combined authorities could employ new data analytics, generating deeper insight into people's lives to inform more responsive techniques to capture their engagement. Local partners could lend more credibility to the case for future devolution if they could point to popular input into and support for proposals.

Finally, there is a real opportunity for devolution to move beyond simply being a technocratic socio-economic solution to the challenge of growth and public service reform, important though that is to effective and impactful decision-making. It should evolve towards being understood and pursued as new statecraft that enables the expression of local identity and culture to a greater extent. A much more decentralised political culture and practice would allow for a richer local democratic dialogue, which may have more impact than a national democratic discussion distant from people's everyday lives. Local governance institutions are better placed to foster the solidarities that must be deepened to overcome the fragmentation that exists in our society.

This envisages an enhanced role for local councillors, as democratically elected representatives who will increasingly play the role of broker and facilitator to enable positive participation and ongoing dialogue. More empowered local institutions, with greater decision-making responsibility over the allocation of public resources, would mean people need to be engaged on a more substantive level in these decisions. This would also counter the sense that communities are simply buffeted by outside forces – a situation in which negative narratives about immigration can all too easily take hold.

Devolution is more than a policy solution. By creating new local spaces through which to engage people in dialogue about their shared future, it offers a potential route through the declining trust in traditional representative democracy on the one hand, and the risks of populism on the other. To meet the challenge of disaffection after the Brexit vote, devolution should be recognised as an opportunity to close the gap between government and the governed. Localised governance that is responsive, inclusive and promotes healthy democratic engagement and dialogue across a shared place stands the strongest chance of meeting the challenges of our times. ■

The smarter option

Keir Starmer has the toughest job in opposition – holding back the tide of a hard Brexit. He talks tactics with *Mary Riddell*



*Mary Riddell is a
writer and journalist*

KEIR STARMER ASKS if we may delay our interview by 15 minutes. The reason, he explains, is that it is his turn to do the school run for his son and daughter, who are eight and six. Once installed in his Westminster office, he lists his pre-work routines. “Get the children dressed, teeth cleaned, hair done.” As an enthusiastic father who loves to read bedtime stories when his parliamentary schedule permits, Starmer will be familiar with the Dutch legend of the boy who prevented disaster by sticking his finger in a leaking dyke.

For such, it sometimes seems, is the task of the shadow secretary of state for exiting the European Union. With the ‘three Brexiteers’ ranked against him in the Tory cabinet and EU leaders offering no concessions, it falls primarily to Starmer to hold back the tide of a hard Brexit. While many colleagues from both parties may share his instincts, he appears to have little formal support in his new role. Recent reports claimed he had only one full-time advisor in a job rendered more difficult by mixed messages from his own party leadership.

Starmer was said to be furious after the shadow chancellor, John McDonnell, described leaving the European Union as offering an “enormous opportunity.” Who, I ask him, is actually setting Labour’s agenda on Brexit? “I wouldn’t want to overplay this [intervention],” Starmer says carefully. “The fractures on the government side are very evident. One thing we [in Labour] have managed to achieve is a high degree of unanimity.

“John was trying to say: ‘Look, we have to be more positive.’ I am very concerned about the prospect of hard, or what I call extreme, Brexit.” Can Starmer think of any examples of which “enormous opportunities” might be on offer? “I’ve been absolutely clear that the single market and the customs union really matter, and that we must... make sure that jobs and trade don’t suffer. John is in the same place. He is very clear about full, tariff-free access. If that is what he is describing as the great opportunity, well fine. But I’m clear that anything other than smart Brexit is full of very, very significant risk.” By “smart Brexit”, Starmer means forging an arrangement that is “collaborative and

close to our EU colleagues." Quite how that vision is to be shaped is less clear.

We meet some time before the Supreme Court is due to sit in judgment on whether the High Court was correct to decide that parliament must have a say on triggering article 50 of the Lisbon treaty, which sets in train the two-year process of leaving the EU. Starmer, the former director of public prosecutions and a lawyer versed in human rights, had not expected the initial case against Theresa May to succeed.

"I was surprised. I'd read the judgment in Belfast, when the decision went the other way, and I thought our High Court would adopt much the same approach. The more I have read and reread the [High Court judgment], the clearer is its reasoning that power should reside in parliament rather than the prime minister using the prerogative."

We do not know at the time of our interview whether the government might change its position and argue that article 50 is reversible. Were it to have done so, then Starmer agrees that the Supreme Court might well overturn the High Court's finding on the grounds that no law has yet been changed. "I think that's right. We have this curious situation where the High Court judgment was premised on the unargued proposition that article 50 is irreversible.

"If article 50 is reversible [and Starmer believes it is], then a lot of the analysis the High Court followed begins to fall away. But barring any new line of argument, such as that one, the Supreme Court is likely to uphold the high court reasoning – that only parliament can unmake a law." In any case, he believes that Theresa May "would have been far better not to rely on the prerogative in the first place. Trying to ensure that parliament has no say [means that] our future and that of generations to come is in the hands of a PM who has no mandate from anyone. That is completely wrong in principle."

Rather gradually, Starmer has been ratcheting up the pressure on the Prime Minister. Following a motion tabled by him to finesse some details of the government's Brexit strategy, Number 10 bowed to pressure to commit to publishing its prospectus before the triggering of Article 50.

While the details remained unclear as this interview went to press, it appeared that the leverage applied by Starmer, with the backing of a sizeable group of Tory backbenchers, might achieve a breakthrough that the PM had previously seemed reluctant to concede.

As he told me earlier: "I've said that we shouldn't have a debate about Article 50 in a vacuum, which implies that we need to find a way of ensuring plans are put before Parliament...Until we see what the government's proposing, it's very difficult. But it's important that Labour is not seen as frustrating the process."

This balancing act, some think, could prove deeply troublesome. The Lib Dem victory in the Richmond by-election indicated that the opposition might be caught in a pincer action between a resurgent Lib Dem party and Ukip, with the potential loss of many seats. Starmer, while acknowledging that Labour faces an electoral challenge, argues that

both parties reinforce division by appealing only to certain parts of the country.

"Labour is aiming to build a national consensus on Brexit – respecting the result but fighting for the best possible deal. If we get that right, there's a huge prize to be won."

STARMER WAS FIRST drawn into politics on a simple prospectus. Named after the first Labour MP, Keir Hardie, he was born into a family of modest means. "My dad was a toolmaker, my mum was a nurse. They could have gone on to higher education, but they didn't have the money in their families to do it. It's not a sob story; that's what happened to people. But they were comforted that things were getting better. That has changed palpably in the last 10 years. That is why populist slogans have such appeal. People not only feel insecure. They feel they can't even have [the hope of] something better to pass on to their children."

There is no more clear example than Keir Starmer of what Ed Miliband used to call the "British promise", under which successive generations fared better than their parents. Now Sir Keir (he never vaunts or even uses his title), he was a barrister before working with the policing board in Northern Ireland. "Becoming DPP was a completely new game. I went from having two or three people for each case to having a staff of 8,000, running hundreds of thousands of cases each year and having to understand what governance means."

It is no exaggeration to say that, in that role, Starmer really did change the world. On his watch, two killers of the black teenager, Stephen Lawrence, were finally tried and jailed after changes to the law on double jeopardy. Shortly after his appointment, Starmer strode into the minefield of assisted death, rewriting the guidance on prosecution and – once he left office – making clear that, as an MP, he would not oppose any move to legalise assisted dying.

With that bold track record, it is unsurprising that the new MP for Holborn and St Pancras was quickly singled out as a future party leader. "I don't think I'd even been sworn in as an MP," Starmer says of the first time his name was mooted. Does he aspire one day to lead his party? "We've just had two leadership elections. The last thing our membership wants is another one. I have respected the outcome of that election [Starmer had previously resigned from Corbyn's front bench and backed Owen Smith for leader]. I am faithfully serving Jeremy Corbyn."

"It's important to concentrate on the programme that will get Labour back into power, not on the personalities. We can muse all day on whether X, Y or Z would be a better leader. The question is: what will give people the trust and confidence to put us back into power? I feel keenly the frustration of opposition. I probably feel it more acutely than others because, when I was DPP, we had the ability to do something about the problems thrown at us."

The question is whether Starmer's undoubted abilities in the legal sphere befit him for high political office. While rumour has it that he is being 'man-marked' by elements

'It's important to concentrate on the programme that will get Labour back into power, not on the personalities'

in the leader's office who see him as a potential threat, some of his new colleagues think he has a lot to learn about politics. Does he recognise that criticism? "Oh yes. I've gone through many chapters in my career, and I fully accept that politics is another different game."

There is no doubting Starmer's commitment to his latest job. Conscious that the north London constituency he serves is no barometer of the English mood, he is assiduous in criss-crossing the country to talk to voters. Some of the remedies he cites to Labour's woes have a familiar ring to them.

On immigration, for example, he sounds closer to those colleagues who wish to curb the numbers of European migrants than to Corbyn, who demands no such restrictions. "The government should explore with our EU partners what more can be done within freedom of movement to allow greater control of our borders. An obvious example is that freedom of movement relates to workers, and that has never been policed particularly tightly. We should talk about restrictions [but] within the freedom of movement principle."

But most migrants do come here to work and pay taxes. I quote to him what Anna Soubry, the Conservative backbencher said recently. Labour MPs, in Soubry's words "are terrified. They aren't speak up for immigration. It's absolutely pathetic. They've left it to an old Tory like me to do it."

"Labour MPs have been clear about migrants' contributions," Starmer replies. "But what is she saying? That it's a good thing that we don't have skills and that we should get them from elsewhere?" Surely, I say, she means Labour is pandering to unfounded fears. "I do respect Anna Soubry. She always speaks her mind, but it's not wrong for Labour to hold these issues up to the light. What we can't do is pander to the more extreme forms of anti-immigration rhetoric."

Tactful he may be, but on some issues Starmer is unequivocal. Just before we meet, John McDonnell indicated in a radio interview that the Labour leadership would not intervene to protect Hilary Benn from a possible attempt to oust him as an MP. What does Starmer make of that? "Let me be clear on deselection. I do not think there should be deselection. I absolutely do not think there should be deselection of Hilary. We should be absolutely clear we do not support it. It's very important for our MPs to hear that from all parts of the party. Of course each local party will determine... who their candidate will be. But there is nothing wrong with a high level statement of principle saying we do not support deselection. I would be happy to subscribe to that."

That apparent rebuke to McDonnell may be a sign that Labour's truce remains fragile. Does Starmer feel part, I wonder, of a government-in-waiting? "It doesn't matter who is leading the Labour party. Unless we have vision, we are going to struggle to win an election. Jeremy has been elected not once but twice. He has ensured that we are the biggest political party in Europe. Jeremy has won the membership. Now he needs to win the country."

The omens elsewhere are not benign, with Marine Le Pen within reach of the Élysée Palace and Hillary Clinton beaten. Does Starmer accept that the centre left has failed

to present a plausible alternative and that, like other social democratic parties, Labour is in disarray? "Absolutely. There is a failure, and it's not a failure of this party leadership or any other. There's a failure on the left generally to construct a project for the future. Politics is all about vision and trust, and there is a yawning gap. The left has not got a plausible vision."

All the more reason, he believes, for people like him to rise above in-fighting. "There is a duty of opposition, and it is a pressing duty when it comes to Brexit. I fundamentally believe on this issue that we have to pull together. The country is looking to the opposition."

What it sees, I put to him, is a confused party that struggles to stick to any line. "I know people want to paint that picture. I genuinely believe that not to be the case. We have sat down and agreed our approach. On the single market, workplace rights, the environment, there is near-unanimity."

As he travels round the country, Starmer draws comfort from the pockets of power held by local councils. "I hope that Andy [Burnham] will be Manchester's mayor and, like Sadiq [Khan], demonstrate what Labour can do in power. We have to have a project for the whole country to win the next election." Is Labour even in with a chance? "We've got a big task ahead. But I would not underestimate for a moment the splits within the Tory party. On Brexit, there is a raw fight going on. That rift has been there for many years, like the family Christmas fight. It never went anywhere because we were in the EU. Now it's a fight to the death."

Labour also has its disagreements, albeit more modulated, on Brexit. Does Starmer, like some arch-Remainers, hope for a second referendum? "We have to be very careful not to argue for a rerun. One of the difficulties of a second referendum is that it assumes that in March 2019 there is a complete deal that can be evaluated. That is not going to be the case." Starmer foresees instead "a deal under which Britain exits the EU under a set of transitional arrangements that will go on for years – possibly five or more."

"Those who want a second referendum should identify exactly what they want to vote on. One of the dangers is that arguing for a rerun distracts from the real fight – between a hard and a sensible Brexit. I passionately argued for remain, but the danger is we miss our chance of a smart Brexit."

With European leaders saying that no such option is available, Starmer must (and does) hope that this stance will soften. For now, the mood in Brussels – which he visits often – is hardening. Meanwhile the situation in London is inchoate, and will remain so at least until the government reveals its hand.

It falls to Starmer, one of the newest recruits to parliament, to help craft a solution that will save Britain from economic meltdown and isolation. To stave off a hard Brexit, he must first prevail against government ineptitude and the uncertainties within his own party. In the Dutch legend, the boy with his finger in the leaking dyke received fast back-up from others who fixed the damage and so kept the flood at bay. It remains to be seen whether Keir Starmer can rely on such assistance. ■

Let us build

Council housing was once a force for good in our communities, says *Roy Kennedy*, and it can be again

I grew up in council housing in south London in the 1960s and 70s. I will always be grateful to Southwark Council for providing a home that was warm, safe and dry and enabled our family to flourish. When we moved into our council home, after living in some very poor quality private rented accommodation, I had my own bedroom for the first time, we had two bathrooms, a large kitchen dining room and a large living room. This was council housing built to the Parker Morris space standards, scrapped by the Conservative government in 1980.

Later, I became the first member of my family to buy my own home. But I have never forgotten how lucky we were to live in council housing.

As politicians, policy makers and professionals in the housing sector we can sometimes get lost in debates over every detail of policy and every number in the housebuilding statistics. But on the numbers, the fact is that in the last few decades, every prime minister has built fewer houses than their predecessor per annum, with the high-water mark being the housebuilding boom under Harold Wilson in the 1960s – a great Labour prime minister who deserves much more credit for his achievements than he is given.

The present government has a truly dreadful attitude to council housing and council tenants. It sees council housing only



as a short-term option for the very poorest on fixed-term tenancies and not, as it should, as somewhere a family can make a long-term home, a community can grow and neighbours can support each other.

Growing up on the Aylesbury estate and later the Pelier estate in Walworth, I recall that there were mixed communities of young families with children of various ages and older, retired people living together quite happily and supporting each other. Not everything was perfect, of course, and certainly flaws in the building of the Aylesbury estate contributed to the difficulties experienced by residents living there in later years.

Council housing gave my parents the opportunity to keep their family safe and provided for; to keep us clean and well-dressed, to be able to send us on school trips with other children and take up other opportunities that were made available to us. While we were never rich, we were a happy south London family with Irish roots in a community we understood and were fully a part of.

But in the years since, the right to buy has changed the face of council estates. More and more council properties have been sold and turned into private rented accommodation, with a constant churn of private tenants often spending only a few months in the area before moving on. And with virtually no new council housing being built, the opportunity for local communities to stay together has been lost.

Now, when I look in the window of my local estate agent I am shocked at the prices being asked to rent ordinary terraced houses very like the one I live in. I just do not know how young families are able to cope: the rents charged are more than my mortgage for the same type of property. For many, the prospect of buying their own home seems ever more distant, with eye-watering

deposits demanded before they can get on the property ladder.

And while there are some very good responsible private landlords there are also some terrible ones. Local authorities often do not have the capacity to be able to deal with the worst offenders effectively. The rogue landlord database, which is an attempt to get a list of the worst offenders and is one of the few positive aspects of the Housing and Planning Act 2016, is not being made available to the public to enable would-be tenants to check if their prospective landlord is on the list.

We need to speak up for council housing – and social housing more generally – at rents that are truly affordable. They should be the safe and stable places where families can start to better themselves and where mixed communities of young and old, families and pensioners, can get along with one another.

But to do that we need a government that stands up for council housing, and builds homes on a scale not seen for many a year. A government that understands the enormous social benefit these homes bring to communities, enabling families to flourish and children to get on at school. Council housing was once, and should be again, an integral part of local communities that deliver for local people – enabling aspiration and helping families to better themselves, while providing the security they need as they face life's challenges.

We need a government that will allow councils to build the homes they need for their communities. Local authorities do a great job in very difficult circumstances. All of them will tell you of the toll housing pressures are taking on their communities and how they could make a significant improvement to people's lives by giving them a home that is warm, safe and dry at a price they can truly afford. **F**

Lord Kennedy of Southwark is a Labour and Cooperative peer and shadow minister of communities, housing and local government. He is also a Lewisham councillor



Heed the message

What can Trump's victory teach Labour about winning elections? *James Morris* says we need to look at the big picture



James Morris is a partner at Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research and a former advisor to Ed Miliband and the Labour party

American political campaigns always teach the world two types of lesson – lessons about political positioning and lessons about campaign technique. The key message from Clinton's failure is that the latter should never determine the former. She may have only lost by a few thousand votes in key places, but with Trump weighing down the Republican ticket, he should never have got close.

We should look at Clinton's failure and Trump's success for clues as to what might help Labour but we shouldn't think there will be anything we can simply copy. It is also important not to see the election as an endorsement of Trump. The Republicans won in spite of him, not because of him – their Senate candidates did better than their presidential candidate in the battleground states of Florida, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Ohio and North Carolina among others. Clinton won the popular vote by 2 percentage points.

Micro-targeting vs the big picture

The Democrat campaign took what Obama did with data and doubled it. Obama's big data gurus had convinced the political world that campaigns are won through micro-targeting, Facebook ads and field campaigns. Clinton put huge emphasis on data, modelling and targeting, using the same consultants and overruling people in her campaign who wanted a more overarching message and less salami-slicing.

The electoral argument for such an approach was similar to that offered by proponents of the 'progressive consensus' in the UK or those who pushed the '35 per cent strategy' and its variants before 2015. The idea is that there is a big enough coalition of voters out there, and the role of the campaign is to identify its constituent parts and motivate them to come to the polls.

Just as the progressive consensus idea seems to have inexplicably survived its drubbing in 2015, so the Clinton campaign is holding on to its idea that motivation was all that mattered. Robby Mook, the campaign manager, recently told a gathering at Harvard that Clinton lost because her team didn't win enough young voters – despite

winning close to 60 per cent of them and despite the big swing away from the Democrats amongst white working-class voters in key states.

With Clinton's base being made up of systematically disadvantaged groups, and Trump running a horribly divisive campaign, her focus was on social inclusion: 'stronger together' was her closing slogan. Where Obama let his race speak for itself, Clinton actively campaigned on the fact that her election would be a first. She even had a glass ceiling at her putative victory party. Sadly, it was never smashed.

When more traditional research techniques questioned the focus on togetherness and identities, they were overruled. The dial groups we ran which track voter sentiment to speeches as they happen, found that it was when Hillary focused on economic change that she soared in the debates – both with her core target groups and white working-class voters. Her poll numbers were highest when she



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was attacking “trumped-up trickle-down economics” and fell when she moved off economic change. Focus groups showed voters didn’t know what she was for or trust her intentions. The campaign response was to sideline all that, to deprioritise focus groups and to trust the analytics and horse-race numbers. The result was a bloodless campaign and an unnecessary loss.

The UK Labour party shouldn’t need to learn that a technically good field campaign counts for little unless the message and messenger is right. In 2015, five million conversations delivered decisive defeat.

Similarly, Clinton’s failure to invest in Michigan or Wisconsin has a lot in common with Labour’s neglect of places like Morley and Outwood. Labour simply didn’t poll in defensive seats before 2015, while Clinton took the midwest Democratic heartland for granted despite poll margins that were steady but far from overwhelming.

The Democrats, at least, have a choice about what to do next because there are places like Georgia and North Carolina that are coming more into play as the ‘rust belt’ becomes tougher. Labour has no such choice – we already have almost all the ethnically diverse seats in England.

Labour’s future depends on winning back voters that are similar to the ones Hillary lost to the Republicans in 2016. The most recent ICM poll shows Labour to have completely lost its class character – we no longer lead among working-class voters. Many have gone Ukip; perhaps not enough to deliver Ukip many seats, but certainly enough to propel the Conservatives further forward.

Cosmopolitanism vs the economy

One obvious lesson on messaging is that running on leftwing identity politics is pretty tough. In the most diverse country in the world, where immigration is part of its founding myth, Hillary Clinton ran a campaign about togetherness and lost. Over here, what chance does a similarly cosmopolitan party which (unlike Clinton) looks down its nose at patriotism, have in a country that is far less diverse?

It’s not like the UK has different patterns of diversity from the US. Just like America, our cities are younger, less white and more progressive. The electoral problem comes in small towns and villages, and also in the regions of the country that have been underserved by globalisation. For Michigan, Pennsylvania and Ohio read almost every region of the country outside London.

Emphasising cosmopolitan values isn’t going to win over white working-class voters, but it would be wrong to think those values are necessarily alienating these voters either. Many voters opted for Trump despite his racism rather than because of it. He increased the GOP share of Latino and black voters relative to Romney despite his deeply offensive language – presumably while they were willing to accept his offensiveness, they didn’t find it actively appealing. It is hard to imagine that his increased share of the female vote was because of his misogyny rather than despite it.

The polling evidence is mixed on how much of a draw his racism was to white voters, but our polling suggests that his stance on trade was particularly powerful in the ‘rust belt’.

Clearly, his angry phony nostalgia was motivating, but he lost the popular vote by 2 per cent while being the only real change candidate in a change election. Something was

holding people back from voting for him – perhaps it was Hillary’s magnetism, but more likely it was it was Trump’s repellent extremes.

What did draw people to Trump was a sense of authenticity, and a commitment to change. Something the Democrats never sustained.

President Obama closed the election by arguing for continuation of progress. Objectively his record is very good, but that is not how people experience it. Nearly four in 10 Americans say they could not handle an unexpected \$500 expense. Two-thirds think the country needs a bold and comprehensive change agenda rather than incremental change, only 39 per cent think the economy is beginning to deliver for them, while 51 per cent say jobs don’t pay enough and it’s a struggle to save.

In this change election, someone who used to live in the White House was always going to be at a disadvantage. What is really surprising is that Trump’s demonstrable lack of qualifications was not a deal-breaker for voters. That may appear to be a chink of light for Jeremy Corbyn. Perhaps sheer commitment to being an outsider champion of the people is enough, no matter how implausible it is.

Positive message, the right attack

However, the other explanation for the result is that voters simply had no idea what Clinton was for. Again, echoing Labour in 2015, she went into the election with a million policies but no story. She oscillated between championing change and running as Obama’s third term; she focused on the economy from the convention to the debates, then gave up on it for the last three weeks of the campaign; she barely ran a positive ad setting out her worldview until the day before election day.

That does not mean negative campaigning is dead. The Conservatives won 2015 with an entirely negative message. But, in the wake of the remain campaign’s failure with its negative message, and Hillary’s failure with hers, it is worth being sceptical of a fear-based campaign which does not sit alongside a more positive, optimistic vision.

The other lesson on negative campaigning is that it is important to pick the right battle. Obama triumphed in 2012 after spending a summer painting Romney as ‘outsourcer in chief’. Clinton chose a different fight with Trump – focusing scrutiny on his divisiveness and incompetence. A priori there was no way of knowing which would be the best tack but in retrospect it was an error to pick a line of argument that was not a huge threat to the voters she needed, including – it turns out – minority voters and women.

It wasn’t just white working-class men that became less Democrat in 2016. Women did, African Americans did, Hispanics did. A micro-targeted campaign aimed at specific groups failed for the reason those sorts of campaign normally fail – shifts in vote are normally like tides, with everyone moving in the same direction, though from different starting positions.

The trick for Labour is to look past technological campaign developments and focus on the big picture of politics. A campaign needs a clear story, to be positively for something, to define the opponent in ways people care about and a candidate who can authentically deliver the message. ■

US special: The doorstep perspective



Ludovica Orlando
spent three months
on Hillary Clinton's
campaign. What was
the message for progressives
she heard from voters?

IT IS OFTEN said that there are two Americas within America, and over the space of three months I witnessed them both first-hand. I was campaigning for Hillary Clinton, first from her headquarters in Brooklyn and door-knocking every weekend in Pennsylvania, and then for two months working as a 'fellow', or campaign assistant, in Ohio. I met an incredible range of people; some grateful for the Democrats' work and others who felt so betrayed by the outgoing administration that you were lucky if they told you to leave without shouting at you. What both groups had in common was that they were willing to share their stories, or at least share why they would vote a certain way.

I will never forget the wine importer in Ohio, who asked me if I would have even glanced in his direction, yet alone spoke to him, if I wasn't canvassing, because I am a young white woman and he is a black man. Or the Latina woman in Philadelphia, who when I said I was campaigning on behalf of Hillary, hugged me and thanked me. Finally, she said, someone was talking about the fact that a Latina woman earns on average 54 cents of the dollar a white man makes. The election opened my eyes to a nation that can be so great and welcoming, yet so terribly unjust.

Every historian will stress how cyclical American politics is and how extremely rare it is to have more than two terms of the same party. My experience in the field taught me just that; Americans wanted change. They didn't care what change it was and how it was delivered – whether through universal pre-kindergarten for four-year-olds, increased pay and training for preschool teachers, and doubling spending on the Head Start early years programme or through pledged tax cuts, infrastructure spending and deregulation.

It felt that, just as Labour failed to own the narrative of the domestic successes during the Blair and Brown years during the 2015 campaign, so the Democrats failed to communicate Obama's achievements to parts of America. Just as here Sure Start and the Equal Pay Act didn't resonate, neither did hearing that unemployment is at a record low in America. Yes, Obama tackled unemployment, but the problem remains that, while 8.5 million college graduates have got jobs since 2008, only 80,000 with high school diplomas have.

Maybe Bill Clinton was right after all, and "It's the economy, stupid!" has to be the theme of any winning election. But how can a Democratic candidate cry "economic failure" when the sitting president is claiming "economic success"?

What should have been said is: "No, your coal mine can never be reopened – but we can invest in retraining you and setting up a factory that builds solar panels here."

Yet this election was about much more than unhappiness with the economy and hatred for Washington. People underestimate the effect that seeing Hillary Clinton on the stage of that third debate, defending the right of a woman to choose what to do with her own body, and proudly stating that Black Lives Matter had on many voters. I've lost count of the number of times I was called a murderer after that debate and how many yard signs reading 'Pray to end Abortion' went up in Ohio.

The left called her the 'establishment', the right a 'crazy radical feminist' who will whip babies from other women's wombs and come into your house to take your guns away from you. The reality though, was an election fought on an impossible curve, where no matter what was done it was always criticised. Clinton delivered the best debate performances, yet no one seemed to care. I heard all the reasons, from "I don't like Trump, but I have to vote for him because I don't think a woman should be in charge" to "She didn't raise her child and had nannies" to "She never took a bus and can't drive" to, my personal favourite "Women cannot run a country because if they have hot flushes they could start wars".

Yes, Hillary Clinton and the campaign made mistakes, and plenty of them. Yes, she should have gone to campaign in Michigan and Wisconsin and maybe spent less time in Ohio – but would that have been enough? But we should also recognise that this was the first election held after the U.S. supreme court ransacked the Voting Rights Act, which penalised minorities and low-income people. We should look, too, at the role that the media played, where in 15 months of electioneering nearly three times more airtime was spent discussing her emails than all policy issues.

Of course three months in a country is nowhere near enough to understand a country's problems, no matter how many hours a day one spends on the doorstep. I can offer a reflection though; spending the next four years cuddling white voters is as wrong as forgetting about them. The coal and manufacturing industries have declined and there is a crisis. But let's not forget that some people have been suffering for longer and they don't deserve to be left even further behind than they already are. We should listen to people's concerns, but we should not accept racism or sexism as the new norm. Progress is about coming together and moving forward.

New York is not America, but the rust belt is not America either, at least not any more. America is becoming more and more diverse and if we don't work to empower people that have been disenfranchised the most, then what is the point of being in politics? ■

Ludovica Orlando is a research and support officer for the Labour group at London's City Hall. She is also a member of the Fabian Women's Network and a participant in the Fabian Women's Network mentoring scheme

The spectators of poverty

Politicians in both Washington and London are too remote from the working-class communities they aim to represent, argues *John Mann*

Early on a cold morning this April, hundreds of my constituents gathered to see the demolition of Harworth pit tower. The pit was opened in 1913 and since 1989 the tower, overlooking the A1, had been a local landmark telling people: 'You are home'. Explosives were set off and a remote-controlled machine was sent in to demolish the remaining foundations, but the tower did not fall. It was only 24 hours later that it could be brought down.

A few weeks earlier, Hillary Clinton had told a town hall in Ohio: "We're going to put a lot of coalminers and coal companies out of business, right?" In 2012 Barack Obama won Ohio by three percentage points. Trump used Clinton's coal comments and took the state and its 18 electoral votes by nine points.

A Hillary Clinton presidency would almost certainly have done more for coalfield communities than Trump's will. She had a \$30bn pledge to bring in better broadband, infrastructure and green jobs – exactly the sort of projects I constantly harangue the government here for. Her careless comments, however, struck a very real nerve: that there is a sneering elite dictating policies and a way of life that bear little relation to the communities they affect.

The land on which Harworth pit tower once stood will be used for business space and 1,700 new homes. We are in need of both. But whilst coal is no longer mined and the tower is gone, people still feel that they live in the coalfields.

It is common on the left to assume that people who live in these areas, be it in Bassetlaw or an Ohio coal town, feel that a left-wing London, New York or Washington politician knows any more about their lives and the challenges they face than someone on the right.

This is the fundamental weakness of the Labour party that requires attention. So much of our party leadership experience life solely in London. The capital is differ-



ent and is seen to be different by the rest of the country.

This is not simply a swipe at the current leadership. It is largely true of them, but it was also true of Miliband and of Blair. It is also not to say that poverty is confined to the coalfield communities – of course there are high levels of deprivation in Hackney and Islington. The deprived of Hackney and Islington are, however, less represented in the party and its membership than their better-off neighbours.

The only reason that the EU result was a shock to Westminster was because few MPs actually knocked on doors during the referendum

My constituency is the size of Greater London. There are more restaurants within two minutes of the London room I rent than there are in the whole of Bassetlaw. More bookshops. More delicatessens. More swimming pools within 10 minutes than within an hour in Bassetlaw. There are as many cafes on Lower Marsh in Waterloo as there are in any one of the towns I represent. And more clothing shops. And market stalls.

I can get to half a dozen accident and emergency departments by public transport in London as quickly as I can to the one, threatened with closure, by ambulance in Bassetlaw. Our choice of secondary schools: three, maximum four. Cinemas – well, we have one. Theatres? Islington has received more arts funding since the inception of the National Lottery than have the entire former

coalfields in England, Scotland and Wales.

When, as a candidate for the Labour leadership, Owen Smith pledged that under him Labour would vote against article 50 unless there was a second referendum or a general election, it went down rather badly amongst my constituents. They heard the same overtones as Ohio voters heard from Clinton: we know better than you. You are too stupid to understand.

The only reason that the EU result was a shock to Westminster was because few MPs actually knocked on doors during the referendum. I did, but I also carry out regular online surveys. That is how I know, for example, that even among those in my area who voted to stay in the EU, most people want stricter controls on immigration. That is also how I knew we were headed for Brexit, which I predicted to within half a percentage point.

In reality, most people have zero interest in the various factions of the Labour party. They do, however, pick up on signs that they are being ignored; that their concerns, priorities and views are regarded with unease or contempt by the powers that be. They can see the retreat to the safety of the party's own echo chamber. Far too many people in the Labour party benefit economically from the policies of a Conservative government. They are the spectators of poverty. Labour's language, across its political divides, is about our policies to help you, rather than our mission to empower you. This disconnect with the working class is the biggest challenge we face and it is not being addressed. In reality, too many people in the party are disdainful of working-class voters and afraid to listen to them because they are unnerved by what they will hear.

The lesson from the US is that somebody always wins an election. If you close your ears, spectating from the sidelines will not be enough. **F**

John Mann is MP for Bassetlaw

Citizens' conversation

The left should not move rightwards on immigration. Instead it needs to foster a new national debate on what it means to be British, as *Thom Brooks* explains



*Thom Brooks is professor of law and government at Durham University. His book, *Becoming British*, is published by Biteback*

NO ISSUE CONCERNS the public more than immigration – and this can look like bad news for the left. Progressives are often perceived as too soft on border controls with harsh consequences at the ballot box. These concerns have only been heightened by Donald Trump’s shock election victory.

But it is a mistake to think that the left must move rightwards to win on immigration. Whatever the Brexit result, the fact remains that Ukip have been unable to win widespread popular support in a Westminster election.

Conservative immigration policy seems to be built on the mantra ‘Don’t Blame Us’. As migration levels rose under successive Labour governments, this was an approach they could run with without taking responsibility for doing anything about it. Now the tables are turned – and the left should hold the government to account for making things worse. We can start by exposing net migration for the shambolic target it is. While the Conservatives keep saying they want to bring this number down, it has gone up on their watch to the highest levels ever recorded. Every year under David Cameron saw higher migration than in any year under Labour. And the figures are still at historically high levels: the latest bulletin from the Office of National Statistics, released at the start of December, shows net migration at 335,000, pretty much where it was a year before. If public confidence is about delivering lower migration, the Conservatives should be in opposition sitting behind the Liberal Democrat backbenches.

Nor is Donald Trump’s victory a clear win for a wholesale anti-immigration politics. Trump is not exactly all-American himself. He’s the son of a Scottish mum and married to a Slovenian while all but one of his five children are first generation American on their mothers’ side – and Americans know this. Trump’s success isn’t about keeping everyone out, but imposing restrictions on some. His wall is to be built along the border with Mexico, not Canada.

So how can the progressive left here win on immigration, without moving rightwards? Firstly, it’s important to shine a bright light on the current state of affairs. Immigration rules are poorly understood for the simple reason that they are made quickly and on an ad-hoc basis, often in an attempt to respond to negative tabloid headlines.

Statutes and rules have been churned out, resulting in a confusing and inconsistent patchwork quilt of regulations running to more than 2,000 pages. Against this backdrop, we won’t win hearts and minds overnight, but we can and should try.

Our first target for a more transparent debate should be net migration. The public wants immigration to come down much as it wants criminals to receive harsher sentences – that is, until it is confronted with the details.

The Conservatives score better than Labour on immigration not because they have brought the total down but because they are more trusted to impose controls. In this context, it’s important to remember that net migration is a composite statistic that brings together as one group every individual that entered or left the UK for a year or more over the last 12 months. And most people I’ve spoken to about this are shocked to hear that net migration, in fact, includes British citizens returning from a gap year or working abroad – more than 80,000 per year. While opinion polls claim support for lower migration, this does not mean that the public wants government to prevent fellow British citizens on a gap year or temporarily working abroad from ever returning home. However, this is precisely what the government will hope for to meet its net migration target. It is perverse reasoning that just exposes how shallow the immigration strategy has become.

Remove British citizens and foreign students from the net migration total and you have reduced it by more than 40 per cent. The much smaller group of migrants left now more accurately captures that group of those who are here

for work, family or asylum that the public expects migration figures to cover.

Progressives, then, should expose net migration as a gross exaggeration. Realistic figures on the migration of non-British citizens are lower and more manageable.

The next step is ensuring that reforms to the system are fair and consistent. At the moment they are anything but. While every political leader claims to take immigration seriously, few seem to know what to do about it beyond careless tweaks. The rules change so frequently that few understand them or how they should be applied. That applies to the Home Office too: it is unsurprising to discover that the government loses more than half of all appeals against its decisions. This is no way to run immigration policy.

One example of the confusion is the myth of free movement. It's simply untrue that any EU national can enter and settle in the UK at will whenever he or she likes. Like any freedom, there are restrictions and the truth is other European countries take more care to police them than we do. If the public wants greater controls on EU nationals living and working in Britain, there is more we can already do, without needing to pursue Brexit. But this would require a hapless Home Office led by a rudderless government to take greater responsibility. Instead efforts at exposing migrants who are in Britain illegally are left to you and me, as landlords, bank managers, teachers and others, essentially doing the government's job for them on the cheap.

We should get back to basics. Instead of leaving it to the tabloids to debate immigration, we need a national conversation and it should start by focusing on British citizenship. Being clear about pathways to becoming British helps to set the parameters for a broader immigration policy.

It's been more than 10 long years since Sir Bernard Crick and his Life in the UK advisory group developed the first British citizenship test and citizenship ceremonies. A decade later and we've seen three editions of the test taken by over two million people and still not a single consultation with any naturalised citizen to assess whether the test and ceremony serve any purpose in helping migrants integrate.

In researching my book *Becoming British*, I spoke to migrants who like me had taken the test to become a British citizen. I learned that, for many, the arrangements in place did little to help new citizens integrate. Indeed they often had the opposite effect, making people feel permanently 'other' despite formally earning full membership of the club. If we can't integrate fellow citizens, we have little chance at integrating other migrants in both the short and medium term.

The citizenship test is like a bad pub quiz. It's full of trivia few British citizens know and should be redrafted immediately to render it fit for purpose. Citizenship ceremonies are important events that should be made more public and welcoming. New citizens should be able to help mentor migrants preparing for citizenship to improve their

transition to a new permanent home in Britain. This was an idea recommended by Crick's advisory group, but rejected by the then government. These mentors could be ambassadors driving the integration agenda, and many, I'm sure, would happily take up this role.

Integration policy must be about more than learning English. When I'm at a public event and ask people what they feel should be required to live and work long-term in Britain, speaking English and living here for several years without claiming benefits are high on the list. Another priority is ensuring no migrant has unspent criminal convictions or engagement in terrorist-related activities. People are regularly surprised to learn that this is already the case. In fact, we can already go much further, denying long-term residency to anyone who hasn't paid their full tax or has been bankrupt previously and so fails the 'good character' requirement.

Educating the public about immigration doesn't require lectures. If you ask people what they believe the restrictions should be if they could start from a blank slate and then show them how the current rules often go much further than they expected, sometimes too far, then you're making progress.

Citizenship is a political identity that must be inclusive of its citizens. Being British is no more about Morris dancing than it is about eating haggis or speaking Welsh. The ties that bind us are not defined by the characteristics of a Geordie or a Scouser, but by those public values and institutions we all share in common, whether it be a

commitment to equality and fair play or parliamentary democracy. Progressives are better placed to promote this inclusive vision than the political right, with its overly narrow view of Britishness that leaves too many fellow citizens out in the cold.

But we can go further still. We should be committed to a new migration fund paid for by a levy on immigration applications and based on the migration impacts fund which Labour introduced,

which I paid into and which the Conservatives quickly buried. This funding would help pay for more teaching assistants, nurses, public services and transport infrastructure where migration is having an impact. It is a much more honest, flexible and effective way of directing money to where it is needed most, in contrast to the current government's immigration health surcharge that raises more funds, but does not follow the migrants who paid into the fund and instead plugs public spending shortages.

A new progressive approach to immigration is urgently needed, but in adopting it we need neither become more rightwing, nor irrelevant to the concerns of voters. The key is in winning public confidence, rather than lowering numbers, and in raising the bar for our brand of leadership. The current rules are unfair, largely unknown and poorly applied. They are focused on a net migration target no one believes in. This cannot be the way forward. Progressives must show the courage of their convictions in defending a more inclusive vision. ■

Our first target for a more transparent debate should be net migration. The public wants immigration to come down much as it wants criminals to receive harsher sentences – that is, until it is confronted with the details

A working-class champion

The battles of a pioneering woman MP nicknamed the ‘Terror of the Trots’ have much to teach us today, argues *Rachel Reeves*



Rachel Reeves is MP for Leeds West. Alice in Westminster: The political life of Alice Bacon is published this month by I B Tauris

IN 1945, Leeds elected its first woman MP, Alice Bacon, who served Leeds North East and then Leeds South East until 1970. Astonishingly, it was 65 years until the city elected its second. When I was elected as member of parliament for Leeds West in 2010, I set out to learn more about my predecessor. Over the years that I have researched Alice’s life and political contribution, seismic event after seismic event has transformed both our country and our party. And yet, Alice’s life story and the insights we might draw from it have only become more relevant.

Alice Bacon is one of the pioneering women who have found themselves almost written out of the history books. Alice was a central figure in some of the defining moments of Labour’s – and Britain’s – post-war history. Entering parliament in 1945, she became a loyal ally and close confidant to her fellow Leeds MP Hugh Gaitskell, and she was a key figure in the Gaitskellites’ struggles against the Bevanite left, serving on the party’s NEC for 30 years. In many ways, Alice’s mission was to see a Gaitskell premiership and a bit of her died when he did in 1963. She went on to serve as a minister under Harold Wilson, driving forward some of that government’s boldest reforms. As Roy Jenkins’ deputy at the Home Office, Alice helped push through the great liberal reforms of the late 1960s – legalising abortion, decriminalising homosexuality and abolishing the death penalty. And, as the minister responsible for schools, Alice was a major player in the Croslandite drive for a comprehensive education system – an ambition which was her political passion.

But beyond these achievements, Alice’s story tells us a great deal about the Labour party. How it used to be, what it represented – and what it has lost.

Alice Bacon was Yorkshire through and through. The daughter of a coalminer, Alice lived almost her entire life in her family home on Castleford Road in Normanton. She was born and bred among the working-class Yorkshire people she would represent for 25 years as a Labour MP.

It was personal experience, not abstract ideology, that shaped Alice’s thinking. When in 1945 she was challenged

by a Conservative MP who argued that the National Insurance (Industrial Injuries) Bill was not ‘true socialism’, Alice was unperturbed. It might not be socialism, she conceded, but at least it “removed some of the effects of capitalism”.

Most of all, Alice’s practical socialist politics were reflected in an absolute commitment to comprehensive education and a hatred of selective education. Alice had been one of the ‘lucky few’ working-class children in the interwar years to get into grammar school, but the experience of teaching in a secondary modern school left her absolutely convinced of the injustice of this system. Her opposition to selective education, she said, “had nothing whatever to do with my politics. It was due to the fact that... I was a teacher in the secondary modern school, and saw the unfairness of the 11-plus system and the separation of children between secondary modern and grammar schools.”

Unlike many of those who sat across from her in the House of Commons, she understood the educational disadvantages experienced by working-class children first-hand. As she told parliament: “I know what it is like to try to concentrate on arithmetic when the class next door, which is separated by a thin partition, is having a lesson in music.”

As Bernard Donoughue, who knew Alice, put it, Alice’s politics were “rooted in the practical problems which concerned her fellow citizens – homes, schools, industrial injuries, job insecurity, pay inadequacy or inequality”, rather than in theory or dogma.

Not only could she speak their language, but Alice was also committed to her constituents. They referred to her as ‘our Alice’, and she reaped electoral rewards from her commitment to them. At every election she fought, Alice outperformed Labour’s national swing.

It was the experience and understanding of the life of working-class women that made Alice’s politics deeply pragmatic, and which brought her – through a very different route – in line with Labour’s great post-war revisionists like Anthony Crosland and Roy Jenkins. In the 1950s, when



© Yorkshire Post

leftwingers were revolted by the consumerism of the decade and raged against “a hell of TV sets and home ownership”, Alice reflected that: “One of the good things in the post-war years has been the fact that ordinary working women have been able to take advantage of electrical appliances which were once considered to be luxuries. Only those who live among working people know the difference which it makes on washing days when the woman of the house can use an electric washing machine instead of having to do a big weekly wash in the old-fashioned way.”

Meanwhile, Alice understood the need for Labour to take a nuanced line on immigration, offering a robust opposition to the prejudices of many Conservatives, but also recognising that the challenges associated with immigration disproportionately fell on the shoulders of working-class people. In 1965, Alice asked Labour conference: “to recognise that these immigrants are concentrated in those very areas where the supply of houses, schools, and teachers is already inadequate ... Until the Labour government can make good these shortages, to put more on the already over-burdened services could lead to a very serious situation.”

Alice was a street-fighter for the moderate wing of the party, battling to prevent deselections, expelling Trotskyite entryists, and earning from Denis Healey the nickname ‘Terror of the Trotskyites’. As chair of the publicity and political education subcommittee of the party’s national executive committee after 1955, she struggled in the face of stern opposition, particularly from Aneurin Bevan, to modernise the party’s approach to media relations. Alice did all of this because she understood that a good media strategy and a moderate Labour party were essential preconditions to Labour gaining power and the gains which she hoped to win for working people – most of all, a first-class education

for all. But everything Alice did reflected an unbending commitment to equality: whether in championing liberal reforms that improved the lives of women and gay men especially, or ensuring better education for working-class children.

As the academic Jonathan Rutherford wrote recently, Brexit has, for the first time in decades, given Britain’s economic losers a political victory over its economic winners. Whatever our analysis of the result of the US presidential election, it too contained an unmistakable class element, with large portions of the centre-left’s traditional, white working-class base abandoning it. The best part of a century’s instinctual bond between parties of the centre-left and working-class voters seems to be breaking apart. The reality for the Labour party – and the western left more generally – is that communities like the ones Alice came from and represented broke resoundingly with the party in June. If Labour cannot reconnect with the language and aspirations of those communities, then it has no future.

What lessons can we draw from Alice’s story? First, that there need be no contest between our principles and an attempt to appeal to the people whose votes the party needs. A party that represents working-class interests should see no conflict with representing working-class values. Second, we must find ways to communicate our politics not in lofty slogans and appeals to universal values, but in practical responses to people’s everyday experiences. And third, that Labour needs more latter-day Alice Bacons: if the party is to represent working-class people today, we must do all we can to ensure they are better represented at every level of our party and in parliament.

Alice was born more than 100 years ago, yet the battles she fought in the party and the country are familiar today. We ignore her instinctive understanding of our working-class heartlands at our peril. **F**

Books

Pick of the political books of the year

1. Arron Banks is one of the big winners from Brexit. A previously obscure multi-millionaire, his heavy investment in the bolshie, boozy, brazen Nigel Farage approach to Euroscepticism has delivered handsome returns: a triumph over 'the establishment' in the EU referendum, a major public profile, and a selfie with president-elect Donald Trump in a gold-lined lift. *The Bad Boys of Brexit* lifts the curtain on a colourful and chaotic Eurosceptic circus. There's no shortage of engaging characters – including a buccaneering Belizean business partner who claims descent from Blackbeard and an avuncular Russian diplomat touting vodka from Stalin's private stash (or so he claims). Entertaining anecdotes abound. I particularly enjoyed the running saga of 'B-Pop' – team Banks' plan for a pro-Brexit rock and pop extravaganza whose shifting line-ups read like a series of entertainment specials pitched by Alan Partridge: "Kate Hoey driving Michael Caine onto the stage in a specially designed Mini while the Who blasts 'We're not gonna take it any more'". Banks finally pulls the plug on this spiralling farce after the Electoral Commission threaten to imprison his organiser for breaking spending limit rules to fund it. At this point the headline acts were "three-quarters of Bucks Fizz and an Elvis impersonator."

Chaos is one theme of the campaign. Conflict is another. The various factions of Euroscepticism bicker constantly, particularly Banks and Farage's Leave.EU and the Vote Leave umbrella backed by Boris Johnson, Michael Gove and most other senior Conservative Eurosceptics. Banks has strong opinions about how to campaign, favouring a populist approach focused on immigration and attacks on 'the establishment', with a shock and awe media strategy. He is scathing about Vote Leave's neglect of immigration as an issue, their preference for "libertarian rubbish" and their "daft promise" of £350 million a week repatriated from the EU.

Personalities and anecdotes inevitably dominate a book written in the heat of a fraught campaign, with little time for reflection. This makes it a great primary resource for future writers interested in the inside story of the campaign, but less useful for those interested in the deeper forces that drove the Brexit vote. This is a shame, as Banks clearly has an insightful perspective on British politics. He was early to spot the key role of immigration in the campaign, and hired strategists who focused on emotive messaging over policy substance – including the Cambridge Analytica team later employed by Donald Trump. Banks conveys a visceral understanding of public resentment towards Britain's political and business elites – one he shares, despite dividing much of the time in this book between London members' clubs and Caribbean islands.

Banks' views dovetail with those of his political hero, Nigel Farage. Banks' admiration for Farage is as effusively expressed as his contempt for practically everyone else in politics, and the growing personal and political bond between the two is one of the more interesting themes



1
The bad boys of Brexit,
Arron Banks,
Biteback, £18.99



2
Kind of Blue,
Ken Clarke,
Macmillan,
£25

of the book. Banks is not keen to rest on his laurels – in the final pages he talks of Brexit as "just the beginning of something bigger" and, despite his repeated protestations to the contrary, I doubt Farage is done with British politics either. Banks' diaries provide an entertaining first-hand account of how his Brexit crazy gang wreaked havoc in British politics. They may yet return to do it again. **F**

*Rob Ford is professor of political science at the University of Manchester, co-author of *Revolt on the Right* and co-editor of *Sex, Lies and the Ballot Box**

2. Ken Clarke is one of that declining species, a politician with a hinterland. Happily married, a keen birdwatcher, a jazz fan, he spent longer in government than any other politician since Winston Churchill.

The range of his political experience is extraordinary. He was one of only two ministers to survive the entire 18 years of Conservative rule under Thatcher and Major and then, uniquely, straddled Labour's 13-year interregnum to spend a further four years in David Cameron's cabinet. What's more, however rough the going got he always looked as though he was enjoying himself. How often I watched him at the dispatch box, effortlessly batting back whatever brickbats were thrown at him. As he himself acknowledges, he appears to have been born with a peculiarly laid back, stress-free personality.

Throughout his long career he has held broadly consistent views: liberal, internationalist, one nation. For all of these reasons he was unelectable as leader of the modern Conservative party, even though his standing with the public was probably higher than that of any other contemporary Conservative.

In each of the offices he held – he was successively secretary of state for trade, education and health, home secretary and chancellor – he took on vested interests, of which by far the most formidable were the British Medical Association ("the most ruthless and determined opponent I ever faced") and the Police Federation.

Britain's relationship with the EU, for which he was a lifelong enthusiast, is a theme that runs throughout. It was John Major who first floated the idea of a referendum on EU membership, which Ken Clarke and Michael Heseltine just about managed to see off, but not before the seed was sown. A long fuse had been lit. "In later years," he says, "Michael Heseltine and I always agreed that this was the biggest single mistake that either of us has ever made in our political careers. We had allowed the idea of a referendum to be given legitimacy again".

The tone of the book, reflecting the character of the man, is relaxed and conversational (indeed much of it appears to have been dictated over a glass of whisky and a cigar) and occasionally banal. I take issue with some of his judgements. Was the Thatcher revolution such "a remarkable success," given its long-term impact on the

social fabric? Does it make sense to suggest that the right-wing press has little or no impact on the electoral process while at the same time acknowledging the part it played in the Brexit campaign?

Overall, however, this is an important book by one of the most substantial politicians of our age. Above all, it is the work of a man who never lost his capacity for independent thought, despite a lifetime at the heart of the establishment. **F**

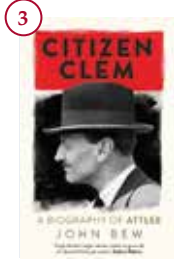
Chris Mullin is a former Labour minister and the author of three best-selling volumes of diaries. He has recently published 'Hinterland – a memoir'

3. Clement Attlee was a reluctant hero. When, towards the end of his last period in government, he addressed the Durham Miners' Gala, he was surprised to see his own face on two huge banners paraded among the 30,000-strong crowd. Imagine how much more astonished this shyest and most unassuming of prime ministers would be to know that, some 50 years after his death, his image would adorn a range of T-shirts, with the slogan "What would Clem do?"

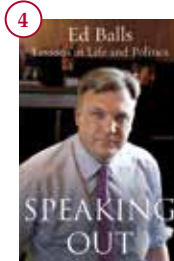
Why this continuing fascination with the man variously dismissed by his contemporaries as a "sheep in sheep's clothing", "a little rabbit" or (by his own health minister Nye Bevan) the "arch-mediocrity"? The most obvious answer, of course, is in the lasting achievements of his post-war government, the most radical in Labour's history. In this absorbing biography, John Bew takes us through those achievements: the creation of the welfare state, the National Health Service and the transition from Empire to Commonwealth. But Bew makes a compelling case that Attlee's greatness is also to be found beyond the legacy of the 1945 government – in his practical and common sense approach to politics that rebuilt Labour after the electoral disaster of 1931 and in his tolerant brand of patriotism that took Labour into the coalition government during the second world war.

Bew's book is rich with detail. Particularly enjoyable are the tales of Attlee's early days in the labour movement – his conversion from public school imperialist to socialist; his practical community work among the deprived communities of the East End and the feeling he had when he joined the Fabians in 1907 that the society's secretary regarded him and his brother Tom as "two beetles who had crept under the door". Watching early Fabians George Bernard Shaw and Sidney Webb on a platform, Clem remarked to Tom: "Do we have to grow a beard to join this show?"

There are resonances in Attlee's story with the challenges facing Labour today, most notably those years in the wilderness when he battled to keep the party alive after many feared Ramsay MacDonald had killed it stone dead. So which is the heroic Clem for our days? Perhaps, for the left, the international socialist giving the clenched-fist salute in Republican Spain. Perhaps, for the right, the cautious pragmatist who warned that a "silly speech by Aneurin Bevan might easily be used to stampede the electors away from Labour". But of the many facets of the under appreciated Attlee, the most inspiring for our days is the Clem who, in the face of bids from both left and



Citizen Clem
by John Bew,
Quercus, £30



**Speaking Out –
Lessons in Life
and Politics**
by Ed Balls,
Cornerstone, £20

right to unseat him, kept the party together to deliver on his dreams of a "new Jerusalem". His message after the Labour conference in 1934, when he told his brother how he "wished people would not always want to be strangling their friends instead of their enemies", is one that more than a few on both sides of the current Labour divide would do well to heed. **F**

Kate Murray is editor of the Fabian Review

4. There can be few politicians who have improved their public image more than Ed 'Glitter' Balls over the last year and a half. He has been on an incredible roller coaster ride from the cusp of becoming chancellor, to losing his parliamentary seat, to a kind of personal reconciliation and opening that has thawed even his most frosty critics. This book is both part of that process of coming to terms with himself, and the story of his time in opposition and government.

Ed Balls has always been a polarising political figure. To what we once called the Blairites, he was the thuggish lieutenant of an insurgency against their prime minister. To the Conservatives, he was that most feared and terrible thing: a tribal Labour politician who understood economics better than they did. To just about everyone he was an intimidating intellectual presence, with the glint of danger in his guarded blue eyes.

As is so often the case, those who worked closely with him saw a different figure. During my time as his advisor, while he was secretary of state for children, schools and family, I never once saw him make a decision I thought was not in the best interests of disadvantaged young people. We made lots of mistakes, but I and the rest of his team were always proud to work for him. He was also personally humane in ways that generated great loyalty. My own father died while I worked for Ed, and he was considerate towards me then in a way I will never forget.

This book reveals that more sympathetic person to a wider audience. The dad who agonised over his children's privacy. The respect and loyalty to Gordon Brown, turning to anguish as that premiership unravelled. The stammering speech maker, who would memorise 3,000 words rather than face a written text he could not read from the page. You get a good sense of both the origin – the family and place Ed comes from, the football and cooking and dinner table conversation – and also the later development of a new hinterland – the running, the piano and now the dancing – that make up a whole life.

A book like this might easily have been ponderous and didactic. Instead there is a clear sense of relief, after so many years of having to be sure, at being able to say how uncertain things often are.

In the end, Ed says this is indeed the end in at least one sense. "I've had my chance in politics and – while you should never say never – I don't expect that chance to come again." The irony is that he would now – more at ease with himself, less likely to retreat to his strengths, perhaps even more ready to compromise a little – be better than ever before. What next for the man with such talents? **F**

Richard Brooks was senior policy advisor to Ed Balls from 2007–09, and worked with the shadow treasury team from 2014–15. He was previously research director at the Fabian Society

Singing for socialism

Deborah Stoate digs up some rousing Fabian songs – and makes a few suggestions for today's meetings



The world may be going to hell in a handcart, but am I downcast? Not a bit of it because I, like the early Fabians, know that the way to banish fear and gloom is to sing. Singing together or alone is a joyous and therapeutic activity. So if thoughts of Trump, Farage or Johnson drift unwittingly into your mind, a quick burst of My Favourite Things or even the Red Flag should banish those unwelcome intrusions. My quest is to find the perfect song to cheer us up in these desperate times.

The Fabian Society was serious enough about the power of song to form, on January 10, 1911, the song book committee, to organise the collection and publication of socialist songs. Miss Mabel Atkinson chaired the committee and Mrs Mood was allocated the task of collecting the songs. Songs for Socialists was published in 1912, subtitled A Collection

of 88 Songs, Most Suitable for Fetes, Social Meetings and Places where they Sing'. It was issued to summer school participants that year and contained stirring socialist and revolutionary anthems – the Marseillaise, the Red Flag and the Internationale and claimed to be 'representative of songs that have been sung over the past 100 years or more by revolutionaries of many schools both in England and America'.

That was, I fear, the golden age of Fabian singing. In 1928, the society moved from Tothill Street to 11 Dartmouth Street and decided to sell the Fabian piano. It had lived in the common room where members were served tea and coffee, played chess and other games, smoked and presumably sang. It takes a great leap of imagination to imagine Beatrice Webb et al, grouped round the old Joanna, belting out ditties, taken from the songbook, like She was poor but she was honest', the chorus of which goes 'It's the same the whole world over, It's the poor wot gets the blame. It's the rich wot gets the pleasure, Ain't it all a bleedin' shame'.

My 1955 copy of the Labour party songbook contains many of the old favourites which appeared in Labour's first songbook Everyday Songs for Labour Festivals, published in 1933. Of the 58 songs, five are socialist anthems and the rest are simply 'cheer up and sing' songs – Knocked 'em in the Old Kent Road, John Brown's Body – although it

also contains the Ballad of Joe Hill which cannot be listened to with a dry eye.

Nowadays community singing, as witness the sadly embarrassing renditions of the Red Flag at Labour party conference, seems to be a forgotten art. I blame cynicism, embarrassment and sheer lack of repertoire.

So what shall Fabians sing to cheer ourselves up at this depressing time? I leave it to you to choose your own special song, and perhaps, if a song for a meeting is needed, organise a ballot where the winner gets to nominate. It must be cheering though. For if the ship of the left is foundering, remember the band on the Titanic, which carried on playing – and maybe singing – until the ship sank.

But for more cheer we must turn to Dr Jacob Jolij, a neuroscientist, who compiled a list of the 10 most cheering songs ever, which I contend are just the type of songs Mrs Mood would choose if she were compiling Songs for Socialists today. Top song was the Queen favourite Don't Stop me Now, followed by Abba's Dancing Queen. But I am plumping for number nine on the list as the song every Labour party and Fabian Society meeting should begin and end with – Gloria Gaynor's I Will Survive.

'Did you think I'd crumble, Did you think I'd lay down and die? Oh no not I.....'

So chin up, chest out and start singing. **F**

Deborah Stoate is local Fabian societies officer

FABIAN QUIZ



THE WORLD-ENDING FIRE Wendell Berry

In a time when our relationship to the natural world is ruled by the violence and greed of unbridled consumerism, Wendell Berry speaks out to defend the land we live on. With grace and conviction, he shows that we simply cannot afford to succumb to the mass-produced madness that drives our global economy. The natural world will not withstand it.

Yet he also shares with us a vision of consolation and of hope. We may be locked in an uneven struggle, but we can and must begin to treat our land, our neighbours, and ourselves with respect and care. We must, as Berry urges, abandon arrogance and stand in awe.

Penguin has kindly given us five copies to give away. To win one, answer the following question: *On what date did the European parliament ratify the Paris Agreement on climate change?* Please email your answer and your address to review@fabian-society.org.uk Or send a postcard to: Fabian Society, Fabian Quiz, 61 Petty France, London SW1H 9EU



ANSWERS MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN 3 FEBRUARY 2017

Noticeboard

By-law change: local Fabian societies

The executive committee has amended by-law 3, clause vi. The revised clause is as follows (new text in bold):

vi. After the inaugural meeting, at which a resolution shall be passed by a two-thirds majority setting up a society, it shall send to the national society the minimum fee plus £1 affiliation fee for each member over the first ten together with its proposed constitution. Recognition shall not be given to the local society until its constitution has been approved by the executive committee or its appointed sub-committee.

Local societies shall send notices of annual general meetings to the national society. The executive committee reserves the right to send an observer to local societies' annual general meetings.

Fabian Fortune Fund

Winner: Richard Porter, £100

Half the income from the Fabian Fortune Fund goes to support our research programme.

Forms and further information from Giles Wright, giles.wright@fabians.org.uk

Listings

BIRMINGHAM

For details and information, please contact Andrew Coulson:
Andrew@CoulsonBirmingham.co.uk

BOURNEMOUTH & DISTRICT

27 January. Rev. Chris Steed. 24 February. Clare Moody MEP: 'Update on Brexit'. 31 March. Baroness Jan Royall Meetings at the Friends Meeting House, Wharnclyffe Rd, Boscombe, Bournemouth at 7.30pm. Contact Ian Taylor on 01202 396634 for details or taylorbournemouth@gmail.com The society celebrates its 125th anniversary in 2017 with activities and meetings. Contact Ian for details

BRIGHTON & HOVE

20 January. Baroness Doreen Massey: 'Social mobility – an impossible challenge?'. 24 March. Andrew Brazeley, policy and research officer, Fawcett Society: 'Local and equal: How we Improve gender equality in our councils'. All meetings at 8pm at the Friends Meeting House, Ship St, Brighton. Please use Meeting House Lane entrance. Details of all meetings from Ralph Bayley: ralphbayley@gmail.com

BRISTOL

Regular meetings. Contact Ges Rosenberg for details on grosenberg@churchside.me.uk or Arthur Massey 0117 969 3608, arthur.massey@btinternet.com

CARDIFF

Society reforming. Please contact Jonathan Evans at wynneevans@phonecoop.coop if you're interested

CENTRAL LONDON

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

CHISWICK & WEST LONDON

Regular meetings at 8pm in committee room, Chiswick Town Hall. Details from the secretary, Alison Baker: a.m.baker@blueyonder.co.uk

COLCHESTER

Hexagonal room, Quaker Meeting House, 6 Church St, Colchester Details of meetings from Maurice Austin: maurice.austin@phonecoop.coop

COUNTY DURHAM

Meetings in alternate months at the Lionmouth Rural Centre, near Esh Winning, DH7 9QE, Saturday 12.15 – 2pm, £3 including a light lunch. Membership not needed on 1st visit. Details from the secretary, Professor Alan Townsend, 62A Low Willington, Crook, Durham DL15 0BG, 01388 746479, Alan.Townsend@dur.ac.uk

CROYDON AND SUTTON

New society with regular meetings. Contact Paul Waddell on 07540 764596

CUMBRIA & NORTH LANCASHIRE

Meetings, 6.30 for 7pm at Castle Green Hotel, Kendal. For information contact Robin Cope: robincope@waitrose.com

DARTFORD & GRAVESHAM

8 December. Cameron Tait, research fellow, Fabian Society: 'Changing Work'. Regular meetings at 8pm in Dartford Working Men's Club, Essex Rd, Dartford.

Details from Deborah Stoaite on 0207 227 4904, or debstoate@hotmail.com

DERBY

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

DONCASTER AND DISTRICT

New society forming. For details and information contact Kevin Rodgers on 07962 019168, or k.t.rodgers@gmail.com

EAST LOTHIAN

7.30pm in the Buffet Room, the Town House, Haddington. Details of all meetings from Noel Foy on 01620 824386 or noelfoy@lewisk3.plus.com

EPSOM and EWELL

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

FINCHLEY

Enquiries to Mike Walsh on 07980 602122, or mike.walsh44@ntlworld.com

GLASGOW

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

GLOUCESTER

Regular meetings at TGWU, 1 Pullman Court, Great Western Rd, Gloucester. Details from Malcolm Perry: malcolmperry3@btinternet.com

GRIMSBY

Regular meetings. Details from Pat Holland: hollandpat@hotmail.com

HARROW

14 December. Gareth Thomas MP. Also Christmas social. Details from Gillian Travers: gillian.travers@hotmail.co.uk Fabians from other areas where there are no local Fabian Societies are very welcome to join us

HASTINGS and RYE

Meetings held on last Friday of each month. Please contact Valerie Threadgill: val.threadgill@gmail.com

HAVERING

Details of all meetings from David Marshall email david.c.marshall@talk21.com or 01708 441189 For latest information, see the website haveringfabians.org.uk

IPSWICH

Details of all meetings from John Cook: contact@ipswich-labour.org.uk, twitter @suffolklabians

ISLINGTON

Anyone who is interested in helping to restart the Islington Fabian Society, please contact Adeline Au: siewyin.au@gmail.com

LEEDS

Details of all meetings from John Bracken: leedsfabians@gmail.com

LEICESTER

New society forming. Anyone interested, please contact Peter Broadhurst: pjbroadhurst@hotmail.co.uk

MERSEYSIDE

Please contact James Roberts: jamesroberts1986@gmail.com

NEWHAM

11 January. AGM at 7pm at the Trinity Community Centre, East Avenue, London E12 6SG. Everyone very welcome to come along and get involved. For details, contact the secretary Tahmina Rahman: Tahmina_Rahman_1@hotmail.com

NORTHUMBRIA AREA

For details and booking contact Pat Hobson: pat.hobson@hotmail.com

NORTHAMPTON AREA

Please contact Dave Brede: davidbrede@yahoo.com

NORTH EAST LONDON

Contact Ibrahim Dogus: ibrahimdogus@gmail.com

NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE

Please contact Richard Gorton: r.gorton748@btinternet.com

NORFOLK

New society forming. Contact Stephen McNair for details: stephen.mcnaire@btinternet.com

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Details from Lee Garland: secretary@nottsfabians.org.uk, www.nottsfabians.org.uk, twitter @NottsFabians

OXFORD

Please contact Michael Weatherburn: michael.weatherburn@gmail.com

PETERBOROUGH

6 January. Anthony Lane: 'Press and the media'. 10 February. Jawaid Khan, community cohesion manager, PCC: 'Syrian refugees – the Peterborough angle'. 10 March. Olivia Bailey, research director, Fabian Society: 'Democratic reform'. 7 April. Liz Knight, academic director, University Centre, Peterborough: 'Educating Peterborough' Meetings at 8pm at the Ramada Hotel, Thorpe Meadows, Peterborough. Details from Brian Keegan on 01733 265769, email brian@briankeegan.demon.co.uk

PORTSMOUTH

Wednesday 23 November, Andrew Harrop: 'The Labour Party and the Fabian Society'. New members very welcome. Meeting at 7.30pm. The Havelock Community Centre, Fawcett Rd, Southsea PO4 0LQ. For details, contact Nita Cary: dewicary@yahoo.co.uk

READING & DISTRICT

For details of all meetings, contact Tony Skuse: tony@skuse.net

REDCAR AND CLEVELAND

New society forming. For information please contact Sarah Freney: sarahelizabeth30@yahoo.co.uk

SALISBURY

New society forming. If interested, please contact Dan Wright on 07763 307677 or daniel.korbeywright@gmail.com

SHEFFIELD

Regular meetings on the 3rd Thursday of the month at the Quaker Meeting House,

10, St James St, Sheffield, S1 2EW. Details and information from Rob Murray on 0114 255 8341 or robertjmurray@hotmail.com

SOUTH EAST LONDON

4 January then meeting on the 1st Wednesday of every month at the Stockwell Community Centre. Contact sally.prentice@btinternet.com

SOUTHEND ON SEA

New society forming. Contact John Hodgkins on 01702 334916

SOUTHAMPTON AREA

For details of venues and all meetings, contact Eliot Horn: eliot.horn@btinternet.com

SOUTH TYNESIDE

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

SUFFOLK

Details from John Cook – ipswichlabour@gmail.com, twitter @suffolklabians

SURREY

Regular meetings. Details from Warren Weertman at secretary@surreyfabians.org

THANET

New society with regular meetings. Contact Karen Constantine karen@karenconstantine.co.uk. For details www.thanetfabians.org.uk

TONBRIDGE and TUNBRIDGE WELLS

9 December. AGM at 116 Farmcombe Road, Royal Tunbridge Wells Contact John Champneys on 01892 523429 or email lorna.blackmore@btinternet.com

TOWER HAMLETS

Regular meetings. Contact: Chris Weavers at towerhamletsfabiansociety@googlemail.com

TYNEMOUTH

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

WIMBLEDON

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

YORK

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

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Yorkshire Regional
Conference

Saturday 29 April 2017,
The Circle, Sheffield:
'Britain in the World'.

Details to follow.

Every minute of every day yet another shopworker is assaulted, threatened or abused



Usdaw's Freedom From Fear Campaign seeks to prevent verbal abuse, threats and violent attacks against shopworkers. Life on retail's frontline can be pretty tough. Our survey results show that nearly half of retail staff were verbally abused and a quarter were threatened last year. One in ten have been assaulted, worryingly a third of them did not report the incident. Shopworkers play a crucial role in our communities and they should be valued and respected.

Voices from the frontline

I often have to deal with all shoplifters. I've been smacked, head butted, spat at and kicked.

I was spat at and had a basket chucked at me.

I had a knife pulled on me and was threatened after I refused to sell alcohol.

I regularly get called stupid etc by customers and told no wonder you're in a dead end job.

I was threatened with a bottle and also told to watch my back on my way home.

I have had my finger twisted, been scratched, sworn at and had racist comments made to me.

Visit our website for some great campaign ideas and resources:
www.usdaw.org.uk/campaigns

To join Usdaw visit: www.usdaw.org.uk
or call: 0845 60 60 640

Usdaw
*Union of Shop, Distributive
and Allied Workers*

General Secretary: **John Hannett** • President: **Jeff Broome**
Usdaw, 188 Wilmslow Road, Manchester M14 6LJ

