

# Fabian Review

CONFERENCE  
SPECIAL ISSUE

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Autumn 2009



## DAYS OF POWER

*(and how Labour should use it)*

Peter Kellner, Yvette Cooper, Oona King,  
Douglas Alexander, Patricia Hewitt, Phillip Blond,  
Sunder Katwala, Richard Reeves, David Blunkett  
Mary Riddell, Roger Liddle, James Macintyre

# GOING FOR GROWTH.



## Good government and sustainable economic recovery

'The next UK general election will take place against the formidable backdrop of a financial crisis and a crisis of confidence in parliament. Although there are promising signals of future economic recovery, business confidence remains fragile. Compounding these challenges, parliamentarians are restrained by a fiscal crisis – caused in part by the government's intervention in markets that were at the point of collapse. To support parliamentarians in this exceptionally testing policy environment, the ICAEW has published its manifesto – our contribution to the debate about how to seize opportunity from crisis.'

Michael D M Izza, ICAEW Chief Executive

We are hosting 11 events across party conferences. We welcome you to join us and become involved in the debate. For more information, see the fringe guide or visit [www.icaew.com/partyconferences](http://www.icaew.com/partyconferences)

**To find out more:**  
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THE INSTITUTE  
OF CHARTERED  
ACCOUNTANTS  
IN ENGLAND AND WALES



Image: Adrian Teal

# The Brighton challenge

Detaching the middle class from the state could spell disaster for the poorest

Don't be surprised if you hear New Labour ministers quoting Nye Bevan this autumn: the language of priorities is indeed the religion of socialism (however moderate). If spending on child poverty, youth unemployment and green jobs really matters, that will mean less for other social goals, often desirable ones.

But different visions of society mean balancing budgets in different ways. And the spending decisions of the next Parliament could have political consequences which last longer than any economic cycle. If progressives do not challenge those who attack the universal provision of services and benefits as unaffordable, we will concede by default an argument which could profoundly shape our welfare for decades to come.

Demos Director Richard Reeves recently suggested that the courage to challenge "Middle England's state-funded perks" would be David Cameron's key test of whether a "progressive austerity" would help the poor. He could not be more wrong. Nothing would be worse for the long-term interests of the poorest than taking the middle classes out of the services the most vulnerable rely

on. This would set Britain on the path to a residualised set of sink services with a deeply segregating effect on society, just as the residualisation of social housing today reflects the way council houses were sold off after 1979.

The success and sustainability of welfare has often been about whether the interests of the middle are aligned with, or pitted against, those of the poor. When the Tories were forced to raise child benefit in 1990 (having previously frozen it), the sharp elbows of the middle class were working for the disadvantaged. The Daily Mail's headline this summer "Tory Tax War on Middle Classes", angrily defending tax credits against Cameron's proposed cuts, might have raised a wry smile among ministers. But they should realise there is a profound strategic lesson here. While highly redistributive, tax credits are harder to slash because they redistribute through a policy which does something for nine in ten families.

But it's more than just aligning interests. When we don't participate in the same institutions, we begin to look at each other differently. And this is bad news for solidarity. The Fabian research project *Fighting Poverty and*

*Inequality in an Age of Affluence* found many people don't feel they have much in common with social housing tenants and are less willing to support them as a result. Richard Titmuss was right when he warned 40 years ago that "services for the poor will always be poor services".

Some on the right propose cutting middle class welfare with precisely the intent to undermine it. Others, sincere in their concerns, misunderstand its long-term effects. What is more surprising is to hear liberal-left voices sleepwalking towards the nightmare of America's threadbare welfare system by offering up their child benefit for the national debt. Much better would be to send an extra tax donation to the Inland Revenue (they will accept cheques). It would have the same effect without unpicking the ties that bind us together.

Universal benefits are expensive. But in the long run the size of the public-spending pie is not fixed. People's willingness to pay depends on what they get back. That's why we had a successful campaign for a penny on tax for the NHS, but never will for legal aid. And this is what lies behind the apparent paradox

of welfare: countries (like America) with systems most designed to target poverty are much *worse* at tackling poverty than countries (like Sweden)

with universalist welfare, based on common citizenship.

Some on the left are asking what we stand for. If we truly care about the fate

of those in poverty, then universalism matters. It is time to stand up for it.

*Tim Horton*

## THE AUTUMN IN REVIEW

email your views to: [debate@fabian-society.org.uk](mailto:debate@fabian-society.org.uk)

FABIAN SOCIETY



Just 200 days before a General Election campaign, what big progressive ideas could shape the future of British politics? See our Fabian Fringe listings on page 34.

When asked by BBC Newsnight's Politics Pen to propose a way of saving significant amounts of money from the government budget, Fabian research director Tim Horton argued to freeze the inheritance allowance at its current level. By scrapping various planned and future increases in the allowance, he argued that we could save anything up to £1.4 billion in the first year, (possibly rising to as much as £2 billion by year five) against various possible future plans. This proposal follows on from *How to Defend Inheritance Tax*, published last year.

### PODCASTS

Single sex schools, all-women shortlists and a new era of feminism are all touched on in a Fabian podcast with author Ellie Levenson following the launch of her new book.

Listen here: <http://www.fabians.org.uk/general-news/podcasts/single-sex-schools-feminist>

Listen in to a debate on the future shape of housing policy and the call for more mixed housing with former housing minister Nick Raynsford, minister John Healey, Shelter's Kay Boycott and Fabian Research Fellow James Gregory. Listen here: <http://www.fabians.org.uk/general-news/podcasts/the-mix>

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

Friday, 24 July 2009

#### [Rip off research](#)

"The way I see it," explained Evan Harris MP at the Fabian public attitudes seminar in Birmingham, "it's poor people taking money from society they're not entitled to or it's rich people taking money from society they're not entitled to. Personally, I'm far happier with the poor evading system as they're poor". Depressingly though, recent JRF research found the public still view the poor with more cynicism than the rich, doubting their ability to make any worthwhile contribution to society. Although the public does agree that some people do well in life because of who they know not because they are especially talented. Whilst the poor are often denigrated, inequalities at the top end can be justified so long as they're seen as fair, the Fabians' found. High earners are more talented, work harder and studied longer, people think. Or rather, thought. People's ability to make order of inequality has come crashing down with the credit crunch and they can no longer rationalise excessive wages as before. Next Rhodri Morgan speaks at the Cardiff leg of the Fabian Roadshow.

Posted by Katy Taylor

Wednesday, 26 August 2009

#### [The primary motivation](#)

A debate about primaries is raging on the blogosphere in and around the Labour Party. Good. We all know the way we do things needs to change and we are desperately trying to work out how, hence our utter obsession with the Obama for America campaign. I have been in favour of primaries for some time. My principal motivations for supporting primaries are to help break the grip of the "hacocracy" over selections and a desire to select people who, if elected, will question more and not be so willing to accept the old ways of doing things. I don't think this is a left/right issue - I arrived at my position having gone through a gruelling, 10 week long parliamentary selection process last year and it is that experience, above all else, which has shaped my view, in addition to this year's expenses debacle.

Posted by Chuka Umunna

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# Poll: Women losing faith in Labour

New You Gov polling commissioned by the Fabian Women's Network reveals some tough truths for Labour

## THINGS ARE BETTER IN EUROPE

**16%** of women think public services in Britain are generally better than in the rest of Western Europe  
**42%** think they are generally worse.

## THE TORIES CARE TOO

**17%** of women think Labour is the party that cares most about public services, with  
**17%** for the Tories.  
This is compared to **23%** of men favouring Labour and  
**15%** the Tories.

## LABOUR'S INEFFICIENCY

**14%** of women think Labour is the party that "would run Britain's public services most efficiently";  
**25%** say the Conservatives.

## MEN DISTRUST THE TORIES MORE

**36%** of men think public services will get worse if the Conservatives win the next election compared to  
**26%** of women. (Though only 22% of both men and women think they will improve)

# Is Labour still the party for Public Services?



Seema Malhotra is Director of the Fabian Women's Network and a management consultant.

One of New Labour's biggest achievements was winning the women's vote; losing it is one of the biggest risks facing Labour today. The gender gap has always been electorally important. In the past women have been more likely to vote Conservative, and the way women have voted overall has been likely to carry the election. But New Labour's winning coalition shifted the balance enough to win two landslides, and even in the tighter 2005 election younger women were still far more likely to vote Labour than Tory, and more likely to vote Labour than younger men.

But our new polling suggests a much tougher message for Labour as it asks the country for a fourth term: the gender gap has opened up again and with it comes a new challenge on public services.

The polling, conducted by YouGov for the Fabian Women's Network, shows that younger men are now more likely to vote Labour than women, and that women do not think Labour cares more about the quality of public services than the Tories. This is despite record investment in schools, health services, nursery education and communities – areas that have been seen as core to making Labour's case to women. Men are more likely to think Labour cares more. Perhaps more surprising is that women are twice as likely as men to say they *do not know* which party cares the most about public services.

The numbers are particularly worrying because public services have been key to Labour's electoral success. After 1997, the campaign slogan "more doctors, more nurses" quickly became the message of achievement. Reduced waiting lists became reduced waiting times as one after another, Labour delivered commitment after commitment on public services, with new schools and hospitals appearing across the UK.

And the public sided with Labour, convinced that the Tories could not be trusted with the NHS, and that higher public spending was needed to deliver better public services.

But if it has delivered so well, why is it that Labour has lost its lead? Our polling suggests political failure on two counts.

First there's been a failure to explain what has been delivered for the amount spent, which has become even more significant at a time of economic instability.

YouGov polling shows that four out of five think money is being wasted in the NHS, and only half think the NHS will stay same or get better or in next few years. Females aged 18-44 are also most likely to say they don't know who will run public services most efficiently, and where they do express a view, are twice as likely to say the Tories. Women overall are less confident than men about Labour running services more efficiently.

The Tories are clearly still vulnerable. A third expect public services to get worse under a Tory Government, with only 22 per cent saying they would get better

With women still often managing the household budget, bearing the brunt of the family's financial stress in the recession, talk of expenditure without clarity on what is being delivered is no longer a winning argument.

Secondly Labour has failed to maintain a relationship with the public whereby they believe Labour does not just pay for care, but actually cares. Only one in five say Labour is the party that cares most about the quality of public services, with men more likely to say this than women.

The image of an unloved public emerges, turning its back on a state and a party that it no longer believes cares for them. The public thinks that Labour has lost its heart.

But there are chinks of light to be found in the data. The Tories are clearly still vulnerable. A third expect public services to get worse under a Tory Government, with only 22 per cent saying they would get better.

What does become apparent is that the battle for public services is going to have to be fought on different grounds. The real danger now is that public will see Tories as delivering the same but for less, and that Labour will lose control over public services for a generation.

## Which of these statements comes closest to your own view?

Britain's public services should continue to be funded almost entirely by taxation, as now	46
Britain's public services should be funded mainly by taxation, but more should be contributed to directly by those who use those services when they can afford to do so	35
Both taxes and spending on public services should be reduced sharply, and the Government should transfer much of the financing and running of these services to the private sector with people paying for their own treatment through private medical insurance	8
Don't know	11

## Thinking now specifically about the NHS which of the following if any has been the single MOST significant achievement in the past decade or so?

Cutting the waiting times for hospital operations	21
Investing in cancer care	17
More access to GPs in the evenings early mornings and on Saturdays	17
Building new hospitals	16
NHS Direct	15
More doctors and nurses	15
Reduction in MRSA infections in hospitals	12
None of these	9
Don't know	20

# Let's show Labour cares



Patricia Hewitt has been MP for Leicester West since 1997 and served in Tony Blair's Cabinet from 2001 to 2007.

There is no doubt that this polling makes depressing reading – especially for those of us who helped Labour close the gender gap in 1997.

But that's not a reason to give up. It just demonstrates the scale of the challenge as Labour enters the final 200 days before the next general election. To have any prospect of closing the gender gap that has opened up on public services, Labour needs to focus on three things: what we offer, how we communicate and how we clean up politics.

Seema Malhotra is quite right to say that Labour cannot go on talking about how much we are investing without explaining what the money is delivering. As far as the NHS is concerned, the Fabian research is clear about what the public likes most – cutting hospital waiting times. Andy Burnham's new NHS Bill transforms the 18 weeks waiting target into a personal entitlement to healthcare that can be used in different ways, and provides the ideal platform for praising NHS staff, reminding the public of what it used to be like and reinforcing the argument that without the money and the targets (which the Tories would abolish) patients would still be queuing.

That achievement is also a chance to tackle the argument about money wasted. In any large organisation, private or public, there's always inefficiency. But because we set the target of abolishing waiting – despite all the critics who said it couldn't be done – NHS staff found ways to sweep away many of the old, wasteful ways of doing things; like asking patients to see the consultant one day, then come back weeks or months later for tests, followed by a third appointment to see the consultant again.

But we also need to explain how Labour would improve public services in the future, despite the necessity to rebalance public finances after the recession. My choice would be based on the excellent green paper on social care. Women are even more likely than men to be caring for an elderly or disabled relative, particularly if they are part of the 'sandwich generation', squeezed between children and parents. The green paper provides the basis for arguing that the 'tough choices' on spending, that any government will have to make, will reflect the real values of the party in power. Because Labour believes that society should pull together to meet everybody's needs, we really can extend the welfare state by protecting

everyone from the burden of long-term care, in return for a payment that is fair to everyone. The Conservatives instead would waste money on inheritance tax cuts for a small number of millionaires.

But whichever policy pledges we choose to focus on, how we communicate is at least as important as what we are saying. We know from years of experience that we can't close the gender gap amongst voters if we don't close the gender gap inside the Labour Party. It doesn't help that there are too few women in the cabinet – particularly when Scandinavia, the United States, France and Spain are setting new standards of diversity. But let's at least make full use of our stars, especially Harriet Harman, in the months that remain. And given the damage done by the expenses scandal, it's high time the party got on with the selection of new candidates, including half from all-women shortlists.

Tone of voice matters too. Whether or not people always agree with Harman, they like the fact that she sounds like a normal person – and they respect her as a conviction politician. All of us who've served as ministers know how easy it is to fall into the trap of sounding like a technocrat rather than a passionate campaigner. We have to admit we haven't got everything right. Telling stories is vital – and it doesn't always have to be ministers who tell them. In my own constituency campaigning, I've found that the most effective communications were the personal letters that came from Labour supporters – for instance, a couple who both work for the NHS – telling people in their own neighbourhood why they were going to vote Labour again.

But we also know that the public's disenchantment with politics and politicians is so deep that we struggle

to get a hearing, however good the message. Here above all, humility is essential. When I first proposed that the public should be involved in sorting out politicians' pay and expenses, I was shocked by how many MPs – Labour as well as Tory – could only jeer. We should get cracking on a Citizens' Convention that would look at voting reform and the second chamber, as well as the role of MPs and how to resource them. And then let's use the Convention conclusions as the basis for a referendum on electoral reform, making the general election truly 'Democracy Day'.

It's a big mountain to climb – which makes it all the more essential we get on with it. By taking bold action in a few key areas and making a clear argument that connects values and policy, we can show women that it is only Labour that cares enough to protect public services for everyone.

FABIAN WOMEN'S NETWORK

[www.fabianwomen.com](http://www.fabianwomen.com)




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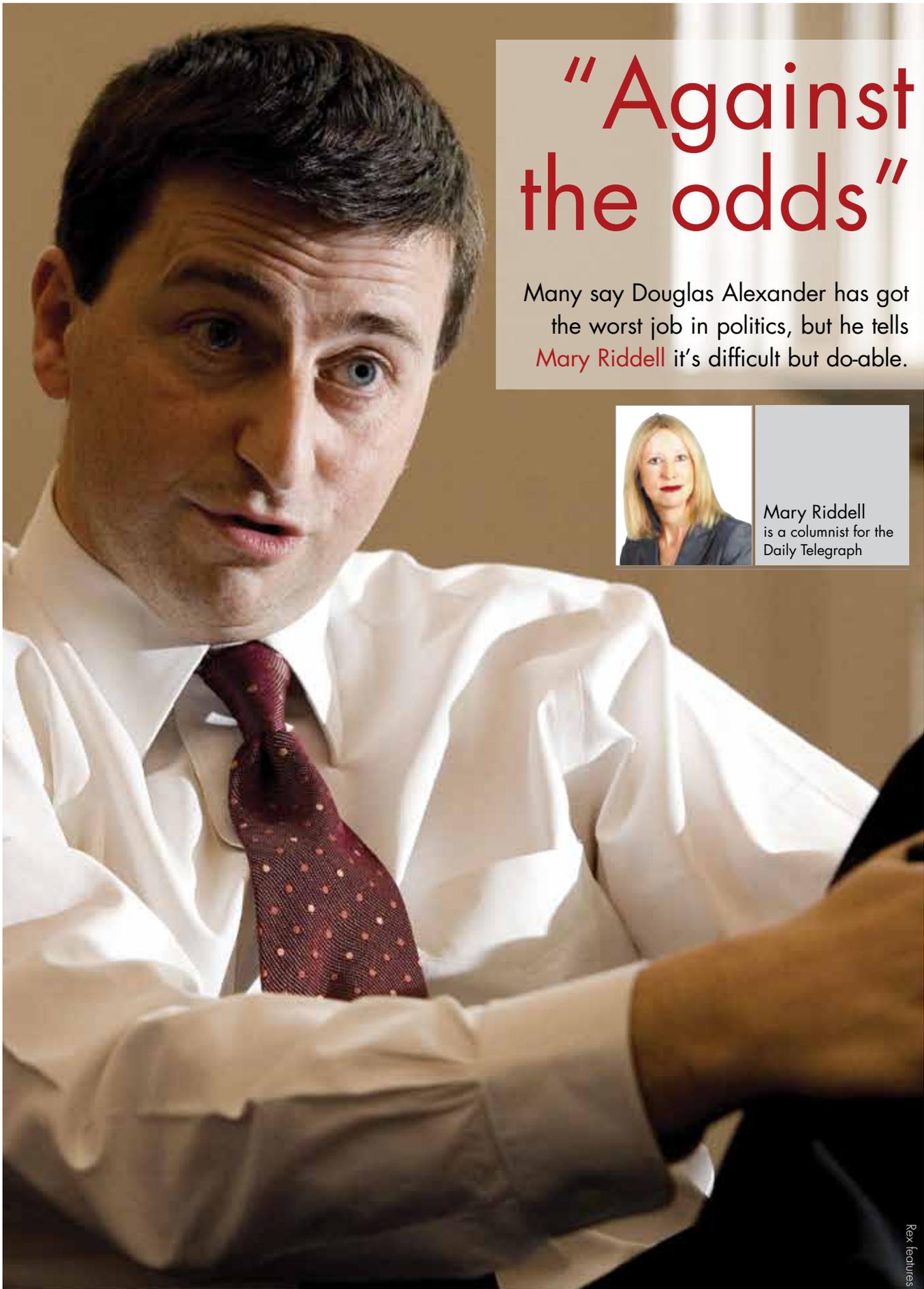
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www.tng.uk.com

# "Against the odds"

Many say Douglas Alexander has got the worst job in politics, but he tells **Mary Riddell** it's difficult but do-able.



Mary Riddell  
is a columnist for the  
Daily Telegraph



Rex features

Douglas Alexander spent his summer holidays on Mull, where he struck lucky. "We caught seven lobsters in ten days. When we were there in the Seventies and Eighties, we used to manage one every three for four weeks. So it was a summer of unexpected progress. We got six mackerel, seven lobsters and one prawn.

"And Alistair Darling caught no lobsters," he concludes, on a note of triumph. A bumper haul of crustaceans is one thing. Fishing for votes is quite another matter, and Mr Alexander's chance of netting a victory at the forthcoming general election looks, on the current polling, to be slim, if not impossible. Not that he would ever be so pessimistic.

The Development Secretary is also Labour's election co-ordinator and, in his latter capacity, the holder of possibly the worst job in the world. Or so many would argue. Not only is the Government trailing by 13 points when we meet in his campaign HQ in London's Victoria. In addition, there are mutterings that Mr Alexander is being undermined from within by Lord Mandelson, who was rumoured at one point to be taking over his election brief. Is that true?

"No, but I welcome Peter's involvement, not just in the Government but in our campaigns. It's no secret – and Peter's talked about this himself – that there were very difficult days in 1994 and the years immediately following," he says, alluding to the great Brown/Mandelson feud. "But that was when I was in Edinburgh, qualifying as a lawyer. So my work with Peter is actually very positive.

"Ultimately, I believe Peter when he says he's a Labour person. So am I, and in that sense, we share a common objective. I have a strong, constructive and positive relationship with Peter. He's seen it all before, and he has personal stillness and authority which even his closest friends would concede were not as obvious when he went to Brussels. He's come back a bigger figure than he left."

Support for the Government is, by contrast much diminished. The slide first began soon after Gordon Brown's electoral honeymoon, with the bad publicity generated by the election that never was.

Unfairly (and maybe nobly), Mr Alexander bore the brunt of the blame

for a fiasco that was reported to have led towards a cooling of relations between him and Gordon Brown. Since then, the Development Secretary has admitted that he was briefed against. Was that very hurtful, especially since other senior figures had been at least as keen as he was for the Prime Minister to seek an early mandate from the voters?

When I joined Labour in 1982, I didn't feel I belonged to a party born to power. My repeated experience was of bitter and repeated defeats. Part of the reason I am so evangelical in our campaigning work is that I had an unshakeable faith in Labour values, but we needed a machine worthy of the message

"If you learn your politics in Scotland, then briefing is not something that knocks you back," he says, resignedly. Like Mr Brown, he is a son of the manse and a long-time acolyte and colleague who began his Westminster career as a Brown researcher in 1990. Is it true that they have grown apart?

"I talk to the PM, but I'm respectful of the fact that he has a different job from when we first worked together almost 19 years ago. He's the PM. He needs a team in the Cabinet, and I'm very happy to play my part within that team. Partly because I worked with him for so long, I recognise that he has thought more deeply about the challenges that will be fundamental in terms of the contest ahead."

But Mr Alexander has scant experience in fighting such a rearguard general election. Is he confident that the strategy and the campaigners are in place? "Well, I relish the challenge. I recognise winning a fourth term is always going to be difficult, but it's doable. We have the answers for today's

challenges. If we'd sat here a year ago, we'd have been in the midst of one of the worst financial crises the world has seen in decades. We were within days or hours of people putting their cards into ATM machines that wouldn't work, or of deposits being lost in banks around the world. That changed politics." His point is that Labour responded correctly to market failure and recession, while Tory policies were wrong.

But it's hard to win votes over disasters that never happened. What, I ask him, about the lesser catastrophes, such as the botched autumn return and, in particular, the mishandled furore over the release of the dying Lockerbie bomber, Abdelbaset Ali Mohamed al-Megrahi. How on earth did that go so badly wrong?

"Listen, stories come and go," he says. "The challenge is to frame the questions that voters will be asking on polling day, such as who has avoided a global depression and worked here in the UK to deliver the jobs of the future as recovery takes hold." So it's all down to tax and spend? "I don't think it's all down to tax and spend, but the economy will be a central argument in the election." His premise, hardly novel, is that voters will turn against a Tory party that believes "you can privatise, merge or deregulate your way out of every problem."

Mr Brown, he believes, will deliver a bold and convincing conference performance, and a speech to rouse the faithful – and presumably even, with luck, the faithless. The PM had rung him the previous night to summon him to No 10 to thrash out details of a text on whose content the future of the Labour party may rest.

But much more is needed to maximise any chance of victory, and Lord Mandelson is reported to have deplored the lack of proven election-fighters around Mr Brown. Mr Alexander cites the blend of Mandelson/Brown experience with "the vigour of youth. If you were to talk to Peter, he would concede he hasn't spent the last decade learning about new media and its role in campaigning."

Mr Alexander, by contrast, long ago met strategists for Howard Dean, the first Democrat to exploit new media, and worked closely with the Obama

campaign's experts in the field. The result, he hopes, is a seamless operation that will mobilise (a dwindling number) of activists and scarce resources, far outstripping Tory prowess. But even if the Web 2.0 election delivers an advantage for Labour, that does not address any lack of hard-hitting strategists. Might Damian McBride, sacked for email discussions on anti-Tory slurs, be staging any sort of comeback?

"No." He won't be proffering any advice in any capacity, however distanced? "No. I think party members and supporters would not tolerate that after the activities that emerged, and I don't think the PM would either." Will Alastair Campbell play a part? "I don't know. Alastair is a brilliant campaigner, and I enjoy working with him. Frankly, I would welcome Alastair's engagement because I think both that he's very good at what he does, and he scares the wits out of the Tories."

It is the first admission – and perhaps a telling one, given that he and Mr Campbell were for so long in opposed camps – that Mr Alexander could use a bit of extra help. What about different tactics, I ask him. Does he, for example, share the Foreign Secretary's and other senior figures' enthusiasm for primaries? "I'm intrigued by them," he says, but he doesn't sound wholly convinced. "What I want to resolve in my mind is the role of party members. I welcome processes that engage the public more, but I recognise that members need an important role in the democratic structure of the party as well."

"It's a matter for the party rather than the manifesto, but it's a conversation that is alive within the party, and rightfully so." It is possible to detect a greater enthusiasm for a referendum on voting reform. Might Mr Brown decide to hold one in tandem with a general election, especially since, by so doing, he might hope to win over a sizeable number of LibDem voters?

"I don't think that should be the determining factor, but I think there's a growing sense in the party that AV is something that should be seriously considered. Thought is being given to AV as part of that broader conversation about how we secure democratic renewal."

But might the PM, who is taking a particular interest, actually do it?

"Much as I admire the Fabian Review, I am not going to impart to it what may happen in the future," he says. So it's definite possibility? "It's an issue that's being discussed. What the timescale is, I can't say."

I put it to him that the Government is guilty of a lack of frankness, not least over Afghanistan, where voters were not warned that going on the offensive in Helmand province would inevitably lead to more loss of life. "Our covenant is to explain," he promises. I wonder if the dislocation between the public's scepticism and the party's rhetoric is partly because New Labour, weaned on success, simply cannot countenance or address the possibility of failure.

Mr Alexander denies any suggestion that he is a silver-spoon politician. "When I joined Labour in 1982, I didn't feel I belonged to a party born to power. My repeated experience was of bitter and repeated defeats. Part of the reason I am so evangelical in our campaigning work is that I had an unshakeable faith in Labour values, but we needed a machine worthy of the message. I grew up with a peerless Conservative machine, with vastly superior money and resources, and one of my personal resolutions was that better people should never again lose out because of a better campaign by the other side. I am unequivocally up for the fight."

What does he make of Jon Cruddas's warning that Labour is going down to "a catastrophic defeat" unless it can make a vast philosophical leap and find a new story of a good society based round fairness, equality and making the rich pay more? "I respect Jon's right to critique the Government, but the challenge is to work as a team and move us forward together."

Would Mr Alexander like to see Mr Cruddas, with his shopping list of fresh ideas, in Cabinet? "He was offered positions, and it's a great pity he didn't [take them]. He has good values, important ideas, and now is the time we need to be working together against the common enemy of the Conservative party. I hope and believe that Jon, along with others, will work to identify the way forward for all of us in the months ahead."

While this sounds almost like a plea, such co-operation may rest on

whether Labour can shift away from a defensive position. How, I ask, is the PM coping with the pounding he has taken? "One of Gordon's strengths is resilience, politically and personally. He has suffered worse than bad headlines. I know from my conversations with him that his focus is not the last few weeks but the current [days]. Conference is our opportunity to speak directly to the concerns of the British people and convince them we have better and more progressive answers."

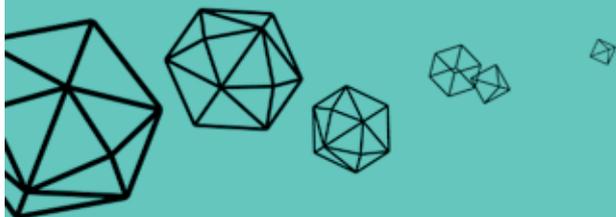
But surely Mr Alexander must also countenance defeat and lose sleep over his tough and lonely job. Does he not worry that Labour's messages still lack a fire and passion? By way of answer, he tells me about his own certainties, reinvigorated by his recent trip to Bangladesh and the vital importance of development spending and tackling climate change.

Is it correct that Alistair Darling may be cutting the development budget? "That story wasn't true," he says, while adding that "spending decisions in terms of departments haven't been made. But we have a manifesto commitment to the UN target of 0.7 per cent [of GDP] by 2013 and we are on track to meet that commitment ... We've trebled the British aid budget. Climate change is the biggest market failure. The Conservatives can put windmills on their roofs if they want."

"I'm more passionate [than ever] about Labour's cause. I've seen the difference progressive government can make. I don't want a government of reaction that will bring division where we've brought harmony." Even the staunchest party supporter may think this final verdict rose-tinted. Cynics might consider it delusional.

Even so, there is no doubting the heartfelt conviction of a politician who has "battled and clawed" against all opposition. Douglas Alexander, an optimist in all circumstances, continues to believe that the sea can yield more lobsters and the country more Labour votes than some deem possible.

"Labour was formed against the odds. All of our truly historic struggles have been against the odds." As he adds, without a trace of irony: "Politics require the sense of possibility. Dare I say it – the audacity of hope."



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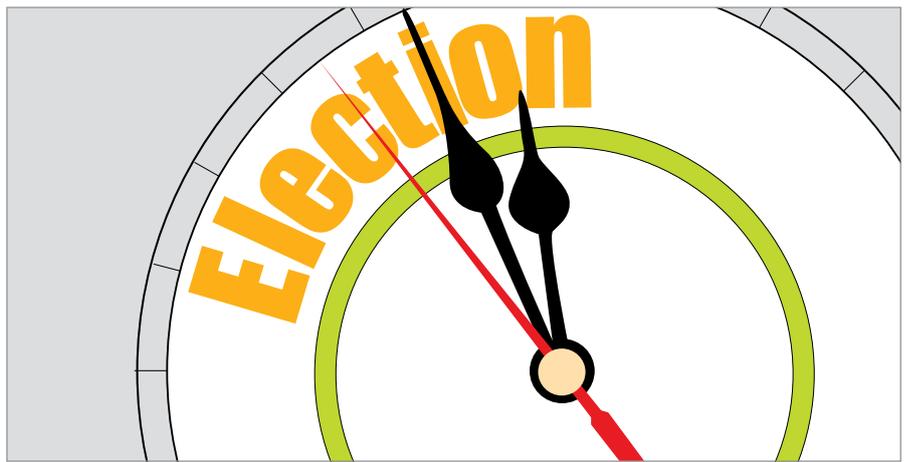
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# And if we lose?

The election is not yet lost, but it's important to think about the worst case scenario, argues Peter Kellner



To avoid charges of defeatist treason, let me start with a statement of the blindingly obvious. Much can happen between now and the next general election. Labour is unpopular, but most voters lack enthusiasm for the Conservatives. (That's the message not just from YouGov polls but from the European Parliament elections and the Norwich North by-election in July.) David Cameron will be tested hard between now and polling day, and might fail the test. A Tory victory is far from certain.

But, by the same token, we cannot ignore the danger that the Conservatives might win, and banish Labour to opposition. For obvious reasons, we can't set up seminars and training sessions to prepare for life after defeat with the ardour that we prepared before 1997 for life in government. This would send out the message that we had thrown in the towel. But unless we start thinking, quietly but seriously, about how to act if we do find ourselves in opposition, then we could end up turning a one-off defeat into long-term disaster.

Remember what happened thirty years ago. Soon after Margaret Thatcher replaced James Callaghan as Prime Minister, the air turned scarlet with accusations of betrayal. I recall going to

a party meeting that summer in north London where the assault was led by one party activist who charged the defeated Government with deserting socialist principles; he demanded a return to our historic mission of dismantling capitalism. He is now a stalwart, and notably moderate, member of Labour's benches in the House of Lords.

Once the betrayal thesis was up and running, the party's left-wing was rampant. Aided by the cynically-cast votes of some MPs who went on to leave the party and set up the Social Democrats, Michael Foot became party leader. A few months later Tony Benn came close to ousting Denis Healey as deputy leader. Party conferences and national executive meetings became noisy battlegrounds in a civil war that lasted until the late Eighties, when Neil Kinnock finally managed to extrude Militant, curb the influence of such destructive people as Arthur Scargill, and restore Labour's relevance to late twentieth century British society. After that, it still took another decade to return to power.

Should Labour lose next year, history could well repeat itself. The betrayal speech, 2010-style, almost writes itself: "Lies about the Iraq war... George Bush's poodle... Cosying up to the rich... Failure to make Britain more equal... Handing public services to private businesses... Billions for the bankers, peanuts for the poor... Too many Labour MPs out of touch with ordinary voters... Time to scrap New Labour and return to our radical roots..."

The worrying thing is that such a charge sheet draws on enough fragments of truth to win over a fair number of

Labour supporters – just as there was plenty of ammunition thirty years ago to attack the record of the Callaghan Government. What was missing then was any compensating account of that Government's achievements. There weren't many – but they weren't negligible either. They included: a new consensus on Britain's relations with the (then) Common Market; new, radical laws to outlaw race and sex discrimination; the introduction of child benefits; a 20 per cent increase in real terms in state pensions; and new benefits for disabled people. Yet, in the battles that crippled Labour in the Eighties, these achievements were forgotten. Shame and revenge replaced pride and respect as the currency of internal party debate.

This time, Labour should be better prepared. There is much to be proud of – far more than in 1979. For a start, we should remember that Labour won three clear majorities in a row: something the party has never achieved before. And plenty of good things have been done over the past 12 years: the minimum wage, devolution, shorter hospital waiting lists, better schools, less crime, tax credits, winter fuel allowance, Sure Start, NHS Direct, greater employment rights, civil partnerships, freedom of information, free museum entry, right to roam, much more overseas aid, many more women MPs and ministers than ever before – and so on.

So: any post-defeat fight back must start with pride in Labour's achievements. But that's only a start; it's not a strategy. If we do nothing more than remind ourselves and the public of the successes of the past 12 years, we will be condemned as a nostalgic, backward-

looking party with nothing fresh to say about the future.

Rather, pride should be employed to secure a number of vital, intermediate objectives: to inoculate the party against the virus of the betrayal thesis; to prevent the Conservatives persuading a generation of voters, as they did throughout the Eighties and early Nineties, that Labour Governments are congenitally incompetent; and to stimulate productive discussions about what future Labour Governments should do. By the time he became party leader in 1994, Tony Blair had to convince voters that he was making an entirely new offer to voters. Hence 'New Labour'. Next time, should Labour lose the coming election, there will be no need to disown the past. The new ideas the party will need should, in the main, extend the ideas of the past decade, not repudiate them.

Which ideas? That the market alone will never completely solve the problems of poverty, housing and climate change; that, nevertheless, market mechanisms can help us to achieve social objectives; that public services must and can be made more efficient and responsive, without suppressing the dedication and vocational passions of teachers, nurses and doctors; that Britain needs to work more closely with the European Union

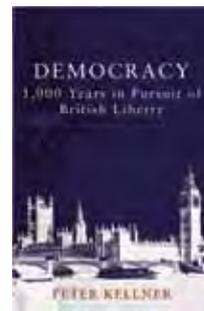
and other international bodies to achieve our goals.

Above all, Labour needs to rediscover its passion for equality – and define what this means for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We know now, if we didn't before, that in a global economy there are huge forces widening the gap between rich and poor. Closing the gap inside one country is next to impossible. But if equality of outcome is out, equality of opportunity is insufficient. Other concepts should be explored, such as equality of access and James Purnell's recent proposal, equality of capability. One clear need is to develop forms of equality that are independent of income: a better health service, improved state schools, more reliable public transport, clean air, crime-free streets, more attractive public spaces, better care for the elderly. If we can't close the gap in money between rich and poor, we should devise ways to make money matter less.

All in all, it's a full agenda that, properly developed, could help limit the next Conservative Government, should Cameron win next year, to a single term. In the Eighties, just about the only thing different wings of the Labour Party agreed on was that we needed to start from scratch. The argument was about what kind of ground zero we should occupy: the anti-capitalist version mapped out

by the left, or the modernising version mapped out by Neil Kinnock, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. The good guys finally won – but the battles helped us to remain in the wilderness for 18 years.

Should we lose next year (and I still hope my thesis will not need to be put to the test), we shall have a choice: remain proud of what Labour has done since 1997, build on our achievements and prepare for a return to government; or descend into another ground-zero-defining war and accept its terrible consequences.



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## A referendum on PR before the next election



A bold move on electoral reform could win back Labour's lost progressives, says **James MacIntyre**



James MacIntyre is the political correspondent for the *New Statesman*

The biggest failure of New Labour – under its own terms and not those set by the right or old left – has been in what Tony Blair's one-time mentor Roy Jenkins called the 'breaking the mould' agenda.

The party came to office in 1997 with high promises of constitutional change; specifically, the – still unimplemented – pledge for a referendum on electoral reform carried the potential to open up democracy and shift the centre of gravity in British politics from centre-right to centre-left. Under the first-past-the-post

system, after all, around one million voters in marginal seats across a right-of-centre Middle England determine election results for the rest of the UK. This means the entire media and political culture is skewed to the right, and towards either stifling a progressive Labour agenda in government or, as it is now, actively willing on electoral victory for the Conservatives.

In that sense, Labour after 1997 failed itself. Along with its constant – and constantly misguided – attempts to please a media owner, in Rupert



Murdoch, whose values are directly at odds with Labour's, the conservative refusal to embrace a genuinely radical constitutional agenda has badly let down the progressive cause. The damage done by New Labour's courting of Murdoch – from a failure to enter the Euro, to excessive Atlanticism and an ultra-hawkish position on Iraq, to a misplaced faith in unregulated markets – is done and cannot be put right. But on the domestic constitutional agenda, all is not lost. There are two reasons why Gordon Brown must find uncharacteristic radicalism in the next six months – a period in which, as it has now been said many times on the left, he has nothing to lose. By seizing the initiative he would be redressing one of Labour's biggest failures and appealing to Britain's silent, progressive majority. But he would also be aiding his party's chances of retaining power and keeping out the Conservatives at the next election. These two motives, one higher and one lower, are interlinked and make up what could be called enlightened self-interest for the party.

The Liberal Democrats, themselves let down by Tony Blair's belated refusal to enter into any form of coalition, are – as they have threatened to before – likely to play a crucial role at the next election. Brown may well need them onside in the (quite likely) event of a

Gordon Brown's Labour Government must do more – it must surprise disillusioned and alienated (but not apathetic) voters and hold a referendum before the general election

hung parliament. And yet at present, they are more distant from Labour than at any time since Paddy Ashdown's private talks in Number 10 during the mid-1990s. Charles Kennedy quickly recognised, as Ashdown came to, that such flirtations were going nowhere. And so the party, which bravely opposed the Iraq invasion in 2003 and has since forged a civil-libertarian agenda, is no longer as natural a bed-fellow to Labour. To make matters worse for Labour, under the guidance of Vince Cable and the leadership of Nick Clegg, the party has moved away from its position under Kennedy – that it would enter into coalition with Labour but not the Tories – to one in which it may be more likely to countenance the latter but not the former.

So what can Brown and Labour do to change this, and what is at stake?

Unlikely as it may feel, unfashionable in Westminster as it may be, and un-populist if not unpopular, the Government has no choice now but to think the unthinkable on constitutional reform if – and all too often it seems to be an 'if' – it wants to retain office. Jack Straw should be saluted for belatedly steering through real Lords reform. But no less than a commitment to a fully elected second chamber, as opposed to any further kind of foggy compromise, will be noticed by the country.

But even more significantly, the prospect of that elusive PR referendum must be revisited. Some in Labour, led by Alan Johnson, talk of a referendum on election day. Others in the Cabinet oppose this, claiming it would 'muddy the waters' for the electorate. Brown is said to take the latter view. However, it is always a mistake to underestimate the intelligence of the British electorate, and voters would surely be able to compartmentalise their choices. The prize, it is argued, could be either a winning sense of radicalism around the Government at election time, or – if there is a 'yes' vote in the referendum but the Tories win the general election – a greater chance that Labour will only be out of office for one term.

But Gordon Brown's Labour Government must do more – it must surprise disillusioned and alienated (but not apathetic) voters and hold a referendum *before* the general election. This is the only way to stand any chance of winning back large swathes of progressive voters who this time will ignore Labour and vote Green, Lib Dem, or even flirt with 'progressive Conservative' candidates. The right will complain, but their hypocrisy – they would not have complained, of course, had Labour honoured its one-time pledge for a poll on the Lisbon Treaty – can be exposed with confident argument. This was also, after all, one of New Labour's original pledges. The vote would crush Tory morale and create sudden, fresh momentum for the Government. Whatever the details, the referendum must be revisited now. Tribalists and traditionalists will scoff. But it could be the Government's only hope of winning back a core constituency that risks leaving Labour for dead.

# Labour's winning values

Britain needs Labour, says Yvette Cooper, so we mustn't give up the fight



Yvette Cooper  
is Secretary of  
State for Work and  
Pensions

Politics has got tougher. Yet faced with pressure in the polls and in the economy, Labour activists should not lose heart. Because the fact is politics matters more than ever right now and there is much to campaign for. The gravest challenge to our economy for generations has exposed profound differences between the Labour and Tory approach – differences that show the importance of Labour values and policies to Britain's future and the grim consequences for our country if the Tories were to get into power.

Of course every Labour Party member knows things aren't easy. The Tories are doing better in the polls. Meanwhile families and businesses across the country are still being hit as a result of the most severe global recession since the Great Depression. Yet the sheer scale of the world economic crisis and response of parties to it has made case for a Labour approach stronger.

When we met at party conference last year the world economy was engulfed by financial crisis. But where Labour was ready to step in to protect people's savings, and to stop banks crashing, the Tories would have let Northern Rock go under and they voted against the powers to rescuing failing banks.

And when the world economy stood at risk of sliding into slump, Labour worked with other governments to boost the economy, back jobs and to get us through. The Tories instead are still calling for cuts in the middle of recession – hitting jobs and investment just when they matter most and plunging Britain into a much deeper downturn as a result.

But these are not just dry economic policy differences. They have immense consequences for families and communities across the country. And they reflect fundamental differences in our values too.

When markets fail – as they did so spectacularly in the financial sector last year – Labour believes government needs to act to protect people, to help families and to get our economy back on a stable footing again. The Tories instead took a right-wing dogmatic view – opposing nationalisation, calling for major cutbacks in the Government's role and opposing extra support for people

For all David Cameron's warm words, the Tories seem to believe instead in turning their backs and leaving people to sink or swim

hit by recession. We believe we should stand together to come through this stronger. For all David Cameron's warm words, the Tories seem to believe instead in turning their backs and leaving people to sink or swim.

Nowhere is this difference more stark than on help for the unemployed. Never again must we lose a generation to work as Britain did in the 80s and 90s. That is why we are investing £5bn extra – including supporting 150,000 additional jobs – so we can guarantee that young people are not stuck on the dole for over a year. Shockingly the Tories are opposing that £5bn investment and every one of those extra jobs. They argue we can't afford to, but the truth is we can't afford not to, otherwise we will see again the scars and the bills of long term unemployment.

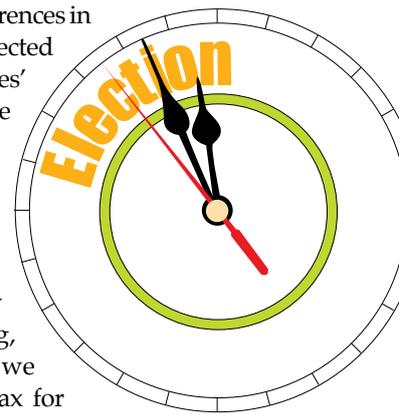
Those differences in values are reflected too in the parties' plans for the future. As we bring borrowing back down again, once the economy is growing, we've said we will increase tax for those on the very highest incomes, so we can support important investment in areas like hospitals and schools. In contrast the Tories are advocating major cuts in education while pledging to reverse the new top rate of tax and introduce tax cuts for millionaires' estates.

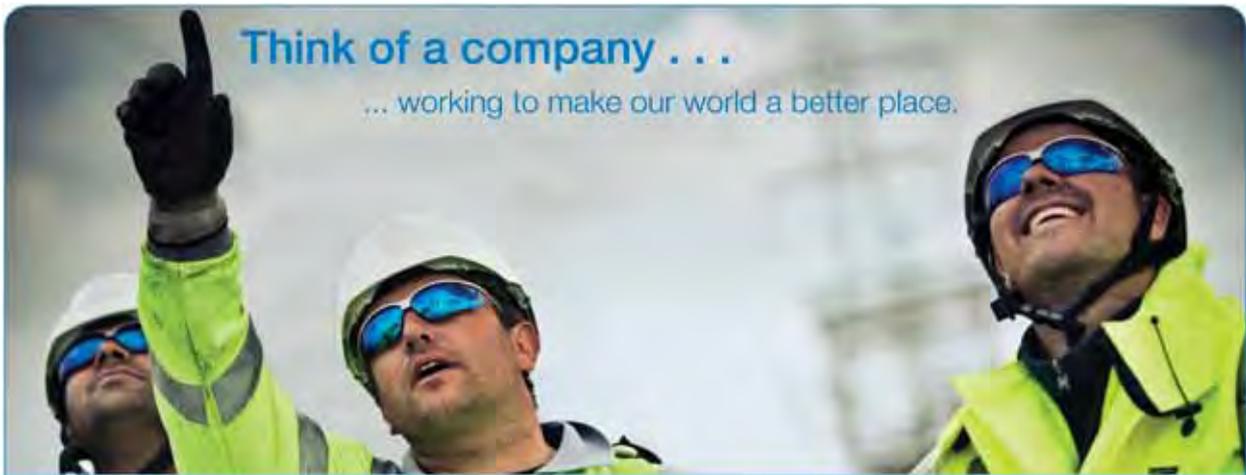
We have the chance to come through the world recession stronger than many predicted a year ago. We have the chance to back the aspirations of the young generation and prevent recession leaving the deep rooted scars and inequalities of past decades. And we have the chance to sustain and improve our vital public services, and go further to build a fairer society too.

Of course we have much to do. All of us need to work harder to show how our values will underpin our vision for the future. We have radical future plans already – whether it be cutting carbon, or raising the school leaving age, creating a National Care Service, or boosting employer support for pensions, cutting child poverty or tackling the gender pay gap. We will need to go further to set out our priorities and new ideas for the next five years, to win the arguments and inspire people to support them.

But we also need to expose the risk of a much bleaker Britain if the Tories get back in – a Britain in which recession lasts longer, scars run deeper and vital public services are jeopardised

The debates will be tough over the next nine months. But the stakes are high and for the sake of Britain's future, we need a strong Labour movement campaigning for Labour values and for the next Labour government now.





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# The battle for the Tory brain



Image: Adrian Teal



Ed Wallis  
is Editorial Manager  
at the Fabian Society

It seems serious scrutiny is finally shifting to what a David Cameron administration might look like. And not before time: the claim that the Tories are newly 'progressive' has been drifting in and out of the political consciousness for a while now, without it being immediately obvious what this is supposed to mean – either in policy terms or for party unity. Slowly some signals are trickling out. The rift within the Party on the NHS has shown that the truce between a reformist front bench and the wider Party may be more fragile than even Labour optimists hoped. Add to this the strident reaction from Tory traditionalists to George Osborne's claim that the "torch of progressive politics" had been passed to the Conservatives, and it's clear that the battle for the soul of the Party is far from over.

All of which requires hard thinking about the left's emerging narrative on the Tories. Central to this is an understanding of our own complicity in allowing this 'progressive' territory to become contested in the first place. The vagueness of a word that first gained traction when David Marquand

used it to describe the divided anti-Conservative forces in the early 1990s was its core appeal for New Labour – it meant you could be 'for the future' without needing to spell out too carefully what that future might look like or what you might have to do to end up there. But Labour and the left's inability to anchor the term with any specific content has exposed it to the current symbolic tug of war.

But key to Labour forming a strong Tory critique is not only knowing where we are coming from but knowing where *they* are coming from. It is important to take Tory claims of a new approach in good faith and investigate seriously. It is tempting to stick our fingers in our ears and hear nothing but Michael Howard's dog whistles. But even the hardened partisan must be able to notice significant changes on the environment, for example.

What's important is whether these will be turned into actual government policy and which side of the Tory brain will get control of the levers of power.

So the question arises: exactly who runs the Conservative Party?

We sought answers from two people who can credibly claim to be leading the charge on either side of the party. Tim Montgomerie has the strength of numbers on his side: his ConservativeHome website has become a true blue hub for party members and parliamentary candidates, of whom an overwhelming majority are ideologically aligned with Montgomerie's New Right revivalism. His regular polls of party members seem to confirm that there is a disaffected and increasingly restless Thatcherite majority in the Conservative Party.

Phillip Blond, on the other hand, has the ear of the shadow front bench, and David Cameron in particular, who have bent over backwards to endorse the 'Progressive Conservatism' project of which Blond has become the established guru. But serious reservations remain as to whether his much trumpeted 'red Tory' thesis will be translated into action in a Cameron government; and how signed up to the project – whose touchstones include a radical critique of the market and the 'recapitalisation of the poor' – the average party member can really be.



**Phillip Blond**

is Director of ResPublica

**1. What do you think the main difference is between the politics of the right and the left?**

Traditionally the difference has been that the left sought to advance its goals by the state and the right by the market. These positions merged under New Labour, as they tried to fuse the two with a vision of the market state. This had disastrous consequences and this triangulation has failed to deliver the results that were hoped. The alternative lies in subordinating the interests of both the state and the market to those of civic society.

**2. Should the example of Margaret Thatcher's governments inspire a David Cameron administration or not?**

Margaret Thatcher sets a positive example in the sense that she had a radical account of the nature of the crisis was that her Government faced and then she strongly fought against vested interests. But there were limits to Thatcherism: she was blind to some of the negative consequences of the paradigm she created and there was a failure to think through the long-term consequences of a purely economic approach to policy concerns.

**3. Should the right support the principle of reducing inequalities in income and wealth in Britain?**

Without doubt - Yes.

**4. Should the Conservative Party advocate deeper cuts in public spending than they have currently proposed this side of the election? Do you agree with ring-fencing the areas of health and international development from any cuts?**

I think the real issue isn't just about cutting – if we cut public spending but don't change how we deliver public services we will be in the worst of all worlds. The key is to innovate; the waste that is currently generated through bureaucracy is far greater than the money that might be saved by any future cuts. We need to restore professionalism in our public services and cut out command and control managerialism.

**5. Should it be unthinkable for Britain to leave the European Union, or could we be better off outside it?**

Both anti and pro-Europeans get this issue wrong. There are many people on the continent who support the European Union but who see real problems with it and want to radically change how it operates. The EU needs much greater focus on the principle of subsidiarity, to drive down power to the lowest possible level in order to create a genuinely popular Europe. A Europe that genuinely works for all the people of Europe would be popular with all parties – we just have to have an open mind on what that could look like.

**6. What is the best thing the Labour government has done since 1997?**

The right to roam and the minimum wage.

**7. And the worst?**

The deprofessionalisation of the public services has been the most destructive aspect of New Labour .

**8. What is the one thing that Cameron's Conservatives haven't talked about much that you would like to see developed as a priority if they were in government?**

The notion of a transformative and truly popular high culture is unaddressed and unacknowledged. Big Brother just extends the passivity and cynicism of British society; whereas, if you look at the role of classical music on the streets of Venezuela, where slum children learn classical music and how to play instruments they have formed not only a successful orchestra and a mass participative tradition but also a functional and sustaining society.

### 1. What do you think the main difference is between the politics of the right and the left?

Left and right are no longer particularly helpful describers. More interesting are the debates between localists and centralisers; liberal interventionists and foreign policy 'realists'; social liberals and social conservatives; radicals and managers. Having said that there are still big differences between the left and right on the size of the state. The left instinctively looks to the state for solutions to problems while the right prefers to look to the market economy and the institutions of free society for progress.

### 2. Should the example of Margaret Thatcher's Governments inspire a David Cameron administration or not?

Absolutely. Margaret Thatcher was the last Prime Minister to inherit a mismanaged economy from a failed Labour government. Her determination to keep taxes low, liberalise trade, deregulate business and not attempt to do too many things all at once are instructive. A Cameron Government must also do much more, however. The society of 2009 is more broken than that of 1979. Thatcher had no big programme for families, inner cities and schools. The next Government needs to fix British society as well as the British economy.

### 3. Should the right support the principle of reducing inequalities in income and wealth in Britain?

Without saying inequality does not matter (I believe it does) it's more important that the problem of absolute poverty is addressed. We should be ashamed that the life expectancy in many big British cities is so low compared to much poorer nations. Beveridge had his five giants. Today's giant causes of poverty are family breakdown, failing schools, drug addiction, intergenerational worklessness and what has been called the soft bigotry of low expectations. The Blair-Brown years have proved beyond reasonable doubt that spend, spend, spend is not a sufficient response to the problem of poverty.

### 4. Should the Conservative party advocate deeper cuts in public spending than they have currently proposed this side of the election? Do you agree with ring-fencing the areas of health and international development from any cuts?

Taxpayers aren't getting value for money from the Labour state. It is not equitable that public sector workers are now getting levels of pay comparable to the private sector as well as the security of a government job. There is a lot of money to be saved therefore and the debt crisis requires larger cuts than currently outlined. In the medium term Britain will need to spend more on health and it should increase its commitment to the world's poorest people. Protecting the NHS and DFID budgets for the next three years, however, will require even deeper cuts in other important public sector budgets and that's not sensible.

### 5. Should it be unthinkable for Britain to leave the European Union, or could we be better off outside it?

I support leaving the EU. I'm a critic of the EU primarily because it has diluted democracy. Voters should be able to change the way they are governed and they can't change the supranational regime in Brussels. The EU has also become something of a selfish giant. Whether it's aid, trade, the environment or rogue regimes, the EU has been too inward-looking. I'd like a Britain that valued the Commonwealth and the USA as much as it valued relations with Europe.

### 6. What is the best thing the Labour government has done since 1997?

The (unfinished) liberation of the peoples of Iraq and Afghanistan from two hideous regimes.

### 7. And the worst?

Woeful mismanagement of the public finances.

### 8. What is the one thing that Cameron's Conservatives haven't talked about much that you would like to see developed as a priority if they were in government?

Ending state and big donor financing of politics so that all parties had to look to ordinary voters for their funding.



**Tim Montgomerie**

is the founder and editor of the ConservativeHome website

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# A better Child Poverty Bill

Taking more children out of poverty isn't just the right thing to do, says **Dan Paskins**, it could have electoral benefits too.



Dan Paskins was Executive Member for Social Inclusion at Oxford City Council from 2004-6, and has also worked for the UK Coalition Against Poverty

I was chatting to someone who hasn't decided who to vote for at the next election. Something that she said really struck a chord: "My friend has got two kids, and she's on her own. Things are quite tough and she struggles to make ends meet. If the Government did something to help her out, I'd definitely vote Labour."

For moral, political and economic reasons, Labour should spend the next six or so months working to help people who are raising families and finding things quite tough at the moment.

This autumn, the Government is planning to pass a Child Poverty Bill. This is a largely pointless piece of legislation which seeks to bind the UK Government of 2020 into meeting tough targets on reducing child poverty – targets which the current Government itself has failed to meet.

With two key amendments, however, the Child Poverty Bill could be an inspiring and effective law which would transform the lives and life chances of millions of people.

The first amendment involves raising the income of poor families by increasing child benefits and tax credits. This will make life easier for people who are out of work or in low paid work to give their children a better start in life.

If the Government were prepared to spend one third of the amount they spent on cutting VAT on giving more money to poor families, then by the time of the next election, Labour would have helped more than one million children (and their families) out of poverty – just as Tony Blair promised back in 1999. And

this would also be a very timely boost for the economy, as mums and dads use the extra money in their local shops to pay for essentials for their children.

It would also help people into work. According to right-wing mythology, so called 'generous benefits' stop people from working. But the reality is that between 1997 and 2007, benefits for lone

When politicians talk about 'welfare reform', for some weird reason they often seem to mean imposing new obligations on welfare claimants, while increasing 'corporate welfare' payments to private companies

parents increased substantially, and more lone parents than ever before in British history got jobs (in many cases for the first time ever in their lives). A mix of universal benefits which go to all parents and tax credits which boost the income of unemployed people and low paid workers are an essential part of any strategy for increasing employment.

The second amendment to the child poverty bill should be to make childcare free for parents who are working or training to get new skills, and raising wages for childcare workers. The cost of childcare is a massive burden for many parents, from people in well paid jobs who have to pay thousands of pounds, to unemployed parents who want to work but can't afford the cost of getting their children looked after while they are at work.

When politicians talk about 'welfare reform', for some weird reason they often seem to mean imposing new

obligations on welfare claimants, while increasing 'corporate welfare' payments to private companies. This is an approach which has been tried and failed – even its strongest supporters at *the Spectator* magazine have described it as yielding "disappointing results".

Genuinely radical welfare reform involves providing free childcare as a right for all workers. This should be a key part of the welfare state, just as free healthcare is. All parents should have the opportunity to work or train to get new skills, safe in the knowledge that their children are getting the best possible care. And no one who is employed doing vital work as a childcare worker should have to live in poverty.

Free childcare would also help grow the economy and increase productivity, as parents need less time off work to look after their kids. Research from Denmark even suggests that childcare subsidies almost pay for themselves over time.

A Child Poverty Bill which helped one million children out of poverty and provided free childcare would be one of the most genuinely radical laws passed by any British Government, inspired by the experience of people who have direct experience of poverty. It would increase our economic competitiveness and help 'make work pay' for more people. And it could come into effect before the next election, providing real help for families now.

In every marginal (and not so marginal) constituency in the country, there are thousands of families living in poverty, or struggling with the costs of childcare. Whether they vote, and who they vote for, will go a long way towards determining the result of the next election. A radical Child Poverty Bill is the right thing to do morally and economically. And it might just be Labour's best chance of winning the next election.

# The new opportunity economy

New forms of economic growth can power Britain's – and Labour's – recovery



Liam Byrne MP is Chief Secretary to the Treasury

Labour's task is to show a renewed approach to the 'opportunity economy'. This vision has always been at the core of New Labour's appeal to the centre-ground of Britain, and the coalition we created with our traditional base. Now we must tell the story again for new times.

First and foremost we need to get through the economic downturn as fast as we can. Tentative signs that the worst may be behind us are emerging – thanks in large part to a global new deal, and rapid action at home. But we must not be complacent – and must demonstrate that progressive economic and social outcomes depend on government being willing to take action in key areas.

The immediate priority is to redouble our efforts to get people back to work. Where we've focused effort – for example helping lone parents – the employment rate has rocketed. But there are still people too far from the labour market, creating too many pockets of deprivation in Britain. For example, if we brought the employment rate in one ward in my constituency up to the national average, we would bring in over £100 million in extra wages each year.

In parallel to this, though, I would identify three central elements for a Labour 'opportunity economy' agenda over the next six months, where we must go further and faster.

First, we must win the public argument

for continued investment now in the new sources of growth that will create new jobs with higher skills and higher wages in future decades. In the past, growth has been driven by private consumption and increased public spending, but these same forces won't act as powerfully in the future. Families and businesses will unwind some of their debts. And now we've fixed the public investment gap, after years of underinvestment by the Tories, public spending growth will slow.

That means exports and investment will need to do more to power growth in the years to come. A crucial test for any government is what concrete steps it will take to actively promote industries of the future such as digital technology, science and low carbon 'green growth'.

Second, we have to make sure these new jobs are not reserved for Britain's elite. We are starting to see progress in cracking Britain's deep-rooted social immobility, thanks to our long-term investment in education beginning with the early years. But sustaining this means showing we will continue to support people across the life course, and adult skills will once again be a centerpiece of our programme with a new National Skills Strategy for the upturn to be unveiled.

Third, we will have to do more to challenge low pay. If we want a genuinely mobile country, we can't have a huge pay gap between jobs at the top and jobs at the bottom. In the decade after 1997, UK average wages rose 59 per cent, a record to be proud of among OECD countries. But nearly a quarter of those in jobs are in low skilled, low productivity and low wage jobs. Labour has been committed to redistribution through our highly progressive tax and benefits policies, such as the introduction of tax credits. We now need to make sure that our economic strategy continues to place a high priority and focus on the interventions which allow low paid workers to acquire higher skills to increase their productivity, their wages, and their ability to progress.

I believe this ambitious agenda of opportunity and social justice will demonstrate the clear political differences we have with the Tories. Progressive parties take real action in a downturn, and then they start forging the future. On both these counts the Tories have nothing to say.

# The golden thread

Labour still needs to harness the power of the internet to bring greater equality, argues Oona King



Oona King is Head of Diversity at Channel 4, and a campaigner on equalities

Over the next few months, there is just time for the left to frame a forward-looking offer that is distinctively ours. It links classic Labour – Nye Bevan's claim that our purpose in gaining power is to give it away – with the 'wikinomics' of the information age. And it recognises something we've been too slow to accept: that a golden thread links participation to equality. In other words, if we want more equality of opportunity and social mobility, we need to get serious about bottom-up collaboration and participation in all areas – from our voting system to the delivery of public services.

How does this mesh with the current febrile atmosphere in Westminster or the next Queen's speech? Clearly, as Westminster politics falls further into disrepute, calls for electoral reform become increasingly clamorous. And although electoral reform is not a guarantor of fairer politics and increased participation, it remains a prerequisite. But electoral reform can only deliver a quantum leap in political engagement if partnered with the emancipation tool of the modern age: digital democracy.

In the last few years progressives have preferred to steer clear of both bandwidth and the single transferable vote. These techie subjects lack the passion we crave. But in the next few

months the Government must make up for lost time, firstly by introducing a referendum on electoral reform to be held at the General Election, and secondly by ramping up the current Digital Economy Bill to create a new generation of empowered, collaborative individuals. The left needs to think more about the elusive ground at the intersection between social capital (the antidote to 'Bowling Alone') and 'wikinomics' – the landscape of collaboration, peer-production and sharing. We haven't fully grasped the danger in letting the right make the running in cyberspace, and not least because collaboration, sharing, and democratising the means of production are the province of the left. The internet not only makes wide-spread collaboration and sharing a possibility; in a global marketplace that's constantly searching for the next innovation, it's a necessity.

But whereas today's marketplace relies on the creativity and collaboration of individuals, today's politics does not. The Westminster village has signally failed to harness active citizenship. A referendum on electoral reform should be combined

with a new narrative around increased participation (both digital and traditional), political inclusion, aspiration, fairness and equality.

It should be bolstered with real measures to make digital democracy meaningful. For example, we should make internet access available free on our 1000 poorest estates. Business (internet service providers, broadcasters and others in the communications industry), and voluntary sector partnerships (such as Citizens Online and The Alliance for Digital Inclusion) should work with the Government to radically accelerate access and take-up amongst our most deprived communities. After all, in the information age, access to information is arguably the key to social inclusion. The forthcoming Digital Economy Bill must be strengthened around this narrative. Although Gordon Brown deserves credit for his fixation on the 'pipes' (broadband), the country and party need poetry, and politicians need imagination.

Imagine if political networking became as popular as social networking. Imagine if this was combined with a

fairer voting system. The result would be a genuinely participative democracy and a fundamental power-shift from politicians to citizens. It's a radical idea, though as Bevan proves, not a new one.

This prospect will naturally make many MPs nervous. It spells the end of the safe seat. But in my view, safe seats are dangerous. I have experience as an MP in a very safe seat and a very marginal seat (albeit in the same seat, which underwent a partly self-induced transformation), and although the latter is harder, it is also clearly better in terms of encouraging politicians to engage innovatively. Many MPs who support the status quo do so because they think it benefits them; but it benefits neither politicians nor the body politic, and least of all citizens.

The Government should act in the time left to change the governance of Britain and, critically, link it to a 21st century future that the left helps define; one where communities collaborate online to change behaviour in the real world, and bring greater equality of opportunity to real people. After all, that's always been our real job.

## THE INFANT & TODDLER FORUM



**The Infant & Toddler Forum brings together a multi-disciplinary team of experts and practitioners who share a common professional interest in infant and child health and nutrition.**

Healthy eating and good nutrition are the foundations of growth and development. At no time of life are they more important than during infancy and early childhood. The purpose of the Forum is to provide and improve the access of healthcare professionals to reliable, up-to-date, evidence-based information on the nutrition and feeding of infants and toddlers, and thereby equip them to advise and support the parents and carers of young children.

Visit [www.infantandtoddlerforum.org](http://www.infantandtoddlerforum.org) for more information about the Forum, to freely access all of the educational resources and to book tickets for this year's Study Day entitled 'Feeding the 21st Century Toddler', to be held on Tuesday 17th November 2009 at the Royal Society of Medicine.



Practical help and information on nutrition and development

The Forum is supported by an educational grant from The Danone Group.

# HOW TO USE



# DAYS OF POWER



Sunder Katwala  
is General Secretary  
of the Fabian Society

You can count off the days on the calendar. As the Labour tribe gathers on the Sunday of its Brighton conference, just 222 days will remain until Thursday 6th May 2010, the date on which the next General Election is most likely to be held.

Everything about the final autumn conferences of this Parliament will suggest that a long season of electioneering is well underway. Yet for Labour to rally its troops it must work out how to challenge and disrupt the conventional wisdom that the election might as well have already taken place, with politics in a strange state of suspended animation as the country waits, with little enthusiasm, for an inevitable Cameron coronation.

This writes off the 200 days of governing power which Labour has before the campaign begins. Of course, thirty weeks is a short time in government. Few politicians now believe modern governments can emulate FDR's famous 'first hundred days' even with maximum political capital; of course no late burst of progressive energy could suddenly satisfy all of the diverse hopes projected onto the Labour Government since 1997.

"Governments overestimate what they can achieve in the short term and underestimate what they can achieve in the long term" as Geoff Mulgan, former Downing Street head of policy has rightly noted. It took New Labour some time to recognise the diminishing returns of a hyperactive blizzard of initiatives and tsars. But there is another lesson here too about the crucial role of government in framing the larger choices our societies face. If excessive ambition, insufficiently focused, could prove fruitless, the cost of fatalism would be greater still.

Policy choices in the coming months could have an enduring legacy, on issues from the public finances to the future of the planet itself. Labour's use of power over the next 200 days could have more impact than anybody realises because British politics is in an unusual state of flux. The economic and political crises of the last 18 months have unsettled and disrupted previous assumptions. So, this autumn, no confident assessment can be offered of three defining questions:

1. **What will Labour's long-term legacy in office prove to be and how far will changes introduced since 1997 endure?**
2. **Has the centre-of-gravity of British politics shifted and how will this affect major choices in public policy over the next five to ten years?**
3. **More immediately, how will the public arguments about what is at stake in this election shape long-term political arguments between left and right, and within each of the major parties too?**

Both the opinion polls and the public finances make any claim that politics is operating within a 'New Labour settlement' much more fragile than it was two years ago. And they have changed the debate within the right too. Up to 2007, early Cameronism was primarily a politics of Conservative accommodation, persuading his own party to accept that the centre-ground has shifted. An increasingly vocal Tory right now believes it can re-legitimise the anti-government, small state and low tax ideological convictions that continue to define the worldview of the emerging generation of Tory candidates.

Yet this is not a moment when politics is shifting unambiguously rightwards, as it did when the post-war settlement unraveled in 1978-79. The financial crisis, climate change and demographic pressures all find the minimal state argument wanting. Labour's younger generation happily critique how far Labour governed within the constraints of Thatcherism, without yet working out how far a politically viable social democracy would differ. The Conservatives shift right on policy yet the continued emphasis on 'progressive' language still pays reluctant tribute to their opponents' arguments. The future of British politics remains up for grabs.

### Why this discussion is not defeatist

When Labour was in the political ascendancy, how to secure a long term legacy was openly discussed. Douglas Alexander saw important lessons in George W Bush's 2004 re-election as to why Bill Clinton's efforts at progressive change could so easily be swept away by what was presented as 'compassionate conservatism'.

This discussion has been muted just when it is most relevant. It would be a serious mistake to fear it is too sensitive a question to be openly canvassed. Far from being an admission of defeat, a strategic use of 200 days of governing power is Labour's best chance to align the challenge of offering a clear electoral choice with a long-term strategy of seeking to 'future proof' Labour's legacy.

Indeed, to fail to have this debate would undermine Labour's campaign. Labour's strategists know they might campaign as an insurgent 'underdog'. What was once the party's most traumatic defeat – John Major's dramatic soapbox fight back in 1992 – has become a curious source of inspiration, as the only time in the last thirty years when two parties sustained a genuine contest about who would govern into the campaign itself. The 'underdog' strategy is more than simple acknowledgement of reality. It should have important strategic implications. Yet it will fail at the first hurdle should Labour's leaders not acknowledge its central premise: that a Tory victory is likely unless voters respond to a political argument that it ought to be prevented.

This should mean Labour fighting a rather different – and less risk-averse – campaign to those of 2001 and 2005. That should apply not just to tactical decisions – such as agreeing to a televised leaders' debate during the election – but to the policy agenda for the Government before the campaign begins.

New Labour's instinct was to blur the electoral dividing lines between the two parties, just as Clinton did. But minimising the public differences is now the Conservative strategy, hence its 'progressive' language. If voters do not think there is any substantive difference between the major parties, the election becomes a referendum on the incumbents, not a choice between governing alternatives.

Of course, a Labour agenda to entrench a legacy does not involve Number 10 asking Hilary Benn to call in his Dad to see whether a late blitz can be made on implementing the 1983 manifesto

Labour's pre-election instinct was to kick difficult long-term choices, like NHS spending in 2001 and pensions in 2005, into the post-election long grass. Now Labour's strategic interest lies in opening up difficult political choices to greater public scrutiny. This can define a progressive battleground for the election. If re-elected, Labour would have a stronger mandate for change. If defeated, forcing the Conservatives to show more of their hand may often see them close down more radical policy choices for at least a Parliament.

### But can Labour policy be entrenched anyway?

Elections make social and political change possible. So the idea of 'entrenching change' may seem undemocratic and, rightly, has limits. There can never be any *guarantee* of 'future proofing' an agenda. The only sure way to extend a Labour agenda is to win again. And so a focus on embedding Labour policy also offers an important way to scrutinise the Opposition; using the Conservative claim to be on the threshold of power to dramatise the risk of changing the party in power.

There is little Labour can do in the next six months that any future Conservative majority administration could not choose to reverse; what Labour *can* do is make it necessary for them to make and win public arguments for doing so. Excitable media commentaries about 'scorched earth' policies miss this central point about how and why democratic change endures. Of course, a Labour agenda to entrench a legacy does not involve Number 10 asking Hilary Benn to call in his Dad to see whether a late blitz can be made on implementing the 1983 manifesto (since a reluctant start has already been made on nationalising the banks). Unleashing a volley of unpopular policies would be a gift to political opponents, who can make popular pledges to reverse them. However the Opposition struggle when progressive rhetoric and Tory instincts collide – they have tried to say almost nothing about the new top rate of tax on earnings over £150,000.

## How to use the next 200 days

### 1. Define 'progressive ends' more concretely

There is little that is politically contentious in discovering that nobody is against a fairer, healthier, happier or safer society: the public argument must be about competing visions of what this means, and how to get there.

That the Conservatives once opposed Labour measures that they now back – such as the minimum wage or devolution – may seem like ancient history to voters now. So the credibility of these conversions can best be tested by finding out whether they will support new measures which extend the same logic. Labour should challenge its opponents by setting out concrete steps for universal childcare and extending flexible working for parents. The guarantee of employment for all new graduates who do not find work after a year should be a general principle, not a temporary recession measure.

Also, with all parties now committed to political 'reform', Labour should offer voters the chance to decide on a new electoral system in an election day referendum.

### 2. Define progressive priorities on spending

Labour must reopen a public argument about where the Conservatives have conflated arguments for spending cuts to balance the public finances with an ideological belief in a smaller state as an ideological end in itself. Vague pre-election talk about spending less could legitimise a much sharper axe later.

It is in Labour's interest to get specific about spending priorities, what not to spend, and where to tax too. That means rethinking the 'investment versus cuts' dividing line of the last two campaigns. But doing so should enable Labour to return to the priorities argument – 'schools and hospitals first' – with which it won a mandate for public services to take priority over lower taxes in 2001. And which, in a different context, can again show that the parties have different instincts about central political choices.

Alistair Darling's budget priority should be to set out a core 'fairness' framework for the post-recession public finances, with concrete plans for spending, taxation and borrowing which centre on the idea that the distributional burden must be shared fairly across society. Specific revenue-raising measures could include a significant redistribution of pension tax relief, and freezing inheritance tax thresholds at current levels for five years.

The Chancellor has still to decide whether to conduct the overdue 3-year departmental spending review. It is in Labour's strategic interest to do so. At the very least, the closer that the pre-budget report and budget come to making detailed spending plans, the greater Labour's chances of setting long-term direction of policy. By contrast, the vaguer the pre-election debate, the happier the Conservatives will be, with free rein to axe at will if elected.

There are also small steps through which the Government could better inform and shape future debate about taxation and spending. Labour introduced distributional tables in Treasury Budget Red Books after 1997 to provide an at-a-glance guide to the overall impact of tax and benefit changes. Had they existed previously, they would have shown how strongly budgets

from 1979-97 benefitted the best-off third of society. Labour should now make their continued publication each year a legal requirement: a transparency principle that progressive Conservatives could surely not reverse. With public spending at centre-stage, Fabian Research Director Tim Horton has proposed that robust detailed analysis on the distributional consequences of public spending – and a commitment to routinely report on the impact of future changes – could make a significant contribution to informed public policy debate about how to balance the budget.

### 3. Choose a key legacy issue in each department

The most interesting theory of democratic transition comes from Conservative frontbencher David Willetts, who suggests that Governments take real power in different departments over time. As a policy adviser in 1979, Willetts suggests that Margaret Thatcher, with Geoffrey Howe, focused on the Treasury on day one, but did not develop a clear education agenda until the second term. (To extend the logic, perhaps Labour never quite gains control of the Ministry of Defence, nor perhaps the Conservatives of the Department for International Development).

Were a Conservative Government elected, it would focus on cutting public spending and on reforming schools, and face enormous headaches trying to work out its European policy. It has sacrificed any concrete health policy to political positioning – opposing any reform which the BMA doesn't like – and travels very light in almost every other policy area.

Using governing power effectively in the next 200 days is not just about framing the big electoral arguments. In fact, this period might be most useful for framing the agenda in policy areas which are not likely to be frontline campaign issues, but which will have enormous policy impact over the next decade. These include ageing and demographics; energy policy; transport; science and universities.

This is not a call for rushing out a great glut of policy. But the Government can frame the future debate with key audiences. If they were to set out a frank account of Labour's record to date, ministers could define one clear strategic policy choice for the future in each major policy area or department. And some significant decisions can be taken too. For example, on the long-term issues of demographic change, Labour should develop its approach, already set out in a green paper, of a hypothecated insurance scheme to fund long-term social care [see Sharon Hodgson on p27]. And, since all parties supported the legislative commitment to linking the basic state pension to average earnings after 2012, Labour should now bring the measure forward to 2010 to ensure the promise is not betrayed by a future administration [see Dave Anderson on p27].

Such an approach would either embed a policy consensus or open up a political choice. The Conservatives can contest these policies, or offer to reverse them, wherever they wish to spend political capital doing so. With growing doubts about whether Conservative progressive rhetoric has any roots, this agenda could, if the worst happened, at least ensure they were offered a substantive progressive policy agenda to conserve, while helping to mount Labour's electoral challenge to the idea that they should get the chance to do so.

# 200

## IDEAS FOR 200 DAYS

### THE BUDGET

#### 1 INTRODUCE A SOCIAL CARE TAX

If an issue is causing consternation amongst voters, you can bet it is also causing headaches in Westminster. The practical effects of pragmatic policies can often leave the public at a loss as to what world we politicians live in.

One such bugbear is when older people are forced to sell their homes to fund their own social care in later life. The status quo is that once your assets top a rather outdated sum of £23,500, you have to sell them off to pay for care before you can claim a penny in support from the state. Instead of celebrating the fact that a growing number of this generation of pensioners has thankfully more to hand down than just a china tea set, wedding rings and the family bible, we are asking our pensioners – many of whom are first generation homeowners – to sell off the sum of their life's endeavours. Nobody would want to watch their own parents go through that, especially when support is readily available for those who have not scrimped and saved for their future. It goes against what people understand to be fair and that is why we must change the current setup.

I am proposing a social care tax, levied at 1 per cent or – if necessary – 2 per cent of income, to pay for social care. The greatest and most significant progressive tax was introduced after the upheaval of the Second World War when Attlee sold us National Insurance to pay for the NHS. Now this generation of Labour politicians can meet the challenge of our changing demographics with bold thinking and brave actions.

Sharon Hodgson is MP for Gateshead East and Washington West and an assistant Government Whip

#### 2 REMAKE THE LINK BETWEEN PENSIONS AND EARNINGS

Margaret Thatcher's decision to break the link between state pensions and earnings shamed this country and was a signpost on the road to New Labour. Sadly, after 12 years in office – and eight years after a Conference decision to reinstate the link – our Government has not rectified this moral outrage.

Pensions have been under great pressure for three decades, with many second pension schemes being undermined or scrapped. The fact that the baseline state pension has also significantly fallen only compounds the problem.

The Government has helped some groups, especially least well off pensioners. But the running sore of the broken link must be removed and now, not after the next election.

There are three good reasons why Labour should commit this autumn to reinstating the link in next year's budget.

Firstly, it is right morally. Pensioners' living standards have been eroded by this policy, especially in relation to European counterparts.

Secondly it is right politically. Of those committed to voting at the next election, more than half are over 58. For all parties, this is core voter territory and for us in particular it will re-engage us with both the older people of this country and our real Labour core supporters.

Thirdly if we don't do it, no one else will. David Cameron is committed to reducing public spending whilst also giving away billions in tax cuts to the children of deceased millionaires. If elected, he will not reinstate the link, which would cascade real unfairness into a fourth decade.

But even worse, Cameron will blame our present government's supposed 'mishandling' of the economy. The end result: pensioners continue to lose their benefits and we get the blame.

The obvious problem is how can we afford it? I would ask how can we afford not to do it?

Price and wage inflation are closer than for decades, so the short term cost would be easier to bear.

But politically the prize is immense. We rebuild faith in real Labour, right a 30 year wrong and expose the Tories, once again, as the party of the few.

Tony Blair was right – we are best when we are bold. Wouldn't it be nice if, just for once, we acted as boldly in implementing a Labour Party Conference decision as we have in ignoring them for far too long? It would improve the position of pensioners and change the political weather.

Dave Anderson is MP for Blaydon

**3 Andrew Harrop, Age Concern and Help the Aged: "Abolish the Upper Earnings Limit for National Insurance"**



# POLITICAL REFORM

## 4 DRAFT A WRITTEN CONSTITUTION

At the Labour Party conference in 2006, Gordon Brown's reference to a written constitution prompted hopes that the new prime minister might be the harbinger of genuine democratic reform. Three years later, hopes of reform remain but the upcoming party conference may represent the last opportunity for the current premier to bring it about. If Gordon Brown truly wants to leave a legacy, then he should draft for debate and endorsement a written constitution to return political power to the British people, announce it at conference, and thus set the policy agenda for the next ten years.

A written constitution is the last unfinished business of democracy in Britain. This is not a matter of merely putting the status quo in writing; imagine the outrage: Article 1 – The Chief Executive of Government will not be elected by the people or ratified by the House but be appointed by the Sovereign; Article 2 – Laws will be subject to veto and delay by an unelected second chamber. Rather, the very act of initiating the codification of the constitution would instigate a new dynamic, a momentum for reform.

My personal shopping list for a written constitution would include constitutionally independent local councils being able to make their own policies and to raise the money to finance them; MPs being empowered to hold the Government to account; prime ministers separately and directly elected by the people; our health, police and public services given meaningful democratic governance; and the people themselves given clearly defined rights and responsibilities. But of course the eventual make-up of a written constitution would be determined by the very people its provisions would govern – the British public.

How might the process pan out? First a reforming PM could present a draft constitution and define how it might be introduced and amended by referendum. He could then announce a consultation period in which parliament and people would debate its contents in the most extended process of pre-legislative scrutiny in our history – and one that would be in danger of getting people excited about democracy.

This could all take place before the next election, though the imperative for doing it is not a political but a moral one. At the very least, the Prime Minister could – and should – start the debate.

Graham Allen is MP for Nottingham North

## 5 ABOLISH THE PRIVY COUNCIL

The Government should scrap the Privy Council. This would cost nothing but would mark a shift to a constitution that, at long last, respects rather than ridicules citizens. It is hard to imagine there are any votes in such a move – but Labour should do it anyway, while it can.

Back in 1994, before he became a Rt Hon himself, Jack Straw argued that the "Privy Council had no place in a western democracy". Despite the vast changes made to the constitution since then, reform of the Privy Council is off the radar. It received no mention in the Governance of Britain Green Paper and remains untouched in the current Constitutional Reform Bill. Now is the time for Jack to make up for this curious omission.

Few people know the Privy Council exists, let alone what it does. Richard Crossman was famously scathing about the ceremonial aspects of the Council. Having spent an hour at Buckingham Palace rehearsing how to stand, kneel and retreat he commented: "I don't suppose anything more dull, pretentious or plain silly has ever been invented". Yet this makes the Council seem quaint and charming at best, harmless at worst.

Nothing could be further from the truth: for all its ceremonial quiriness the Privy Council is the velvet constitutional glove that conceals the iron fist of unaccountable royal prerogative power. The council is an unelected body that can make laws without parliamentary scrutiny by passing 'orders in council' under the royal prerogative. Laws made under orders in council have the same force as primary legislation but are not scrutinised by parliament and do not have to comply with constitutional checks such as the Human Rights Act. Among the council's most controversial recent decisions was an order approving the exile of residents of the Chagos Islands to make way for a US airbase.

The Council conceals vast reservoirs of executive power. There is now a cross-party consensus that the prerogative powers should be abolished, yet any debate on the prerogative has to include the fate of the body that formal exercises it. Without the prerogative powers, the Privy Council would be an entirely ceremonial body. Rather than leaving it to its own devices, it should be scrapped. In the next six months the Government has an opportunity to signal that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century there is no aspect of our constitution that exists on a higher plane than democracy.

Richard Reeves, Director of Demos and Dan Leighton, head of Demos' Citizenship Programme

## 6 DEVOLVE MORE POWER TO WALES

Tony Blair once told a Labour Party Conference that we are at our best when we are boldest. Actually, New Labour has been far too timid, even in such potentially helpful circumstances as the collapse of the capitalist banking system. Radical and redistributive measures such as tax credits have been handled almost apologetically, as though to underline Labour's anxiety to feel totally relaxed with the filthy rich. By background and instinct, we are a democratic socialist party. Between now and the election both aspects should be emphasised far more strongly.

Both would grow naturally out of recent crises – more democracy from the recent plummeting esteem of the parliamentary system, more socialism from the public outcry following the credit crunch, fat-cat life-styles and the current chaos of free-market capitalism. For too long we have been uninspiring centralists and managerialists without a doctrine. Both of the above approaches should appeal to a democratic socialist like Gordon Brown (whom I support).

One particular issue close to my heart would be giving the Welsh Assembly the same powers as the Scottish Parliament, proper legislative authority (the present procedure is absurdly circular and complicated) and the prospect of financial powers (no representation without taxation, to invert the American colonists' cry). This would be achievable in the pre-election period, it would put Unionist, insular Tories on the spot, and would be in itself a genuine advance for democracy. Then we would really be at our boldest.

Kenneth Morgan, author of *Consensus and Disunity*, *Labour in Power*, *Labour People* and *The People's Peace*, and biographies of Lloyd George, Keir Hardie, Jim Callaghan and Michael Foot

## 7 ESTABLISH A SCHOOL BUS NETWORK

Even in the twilight months of this parliament, we still have an enormous opportunity to fight climate change, cut carbon emissions, improve child safety, tackle traffic congestion and create jobs – all by implementing one single policy.

A nationwide yellow bus scheme of dedicated home-to-school transport for all primary school pupils – with some coverage for secondary schools – would be a massive boon across a range of policy areas.

Currently, because of safety fears, only one in eight primary pupils travels to school by bus. Bringing in a school bus scheme would reduce car journeys to school by a fifth. Not only would this enable those who are struggling to cope with rush hour to cut their blood pressure, but it would also cut carbon emissions dramatically: the estimated reduction of 130 million car journeys per year equates to 55,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide.

As we are in an era of increased financial scrutiny and restraint, it is worth stating that the beauty of this scheme is its cost – or rather, its benefits. For a relatively modest outlay of £154 million per annum, government could save more than £460 million every year in reduced traffic congestion, truancy and job creation. Parents themselves would save around £362 million in, for example, reduced car costs.

Then there are the educational benefits. All the evidence shows that children who use school bus systems arrive at school more alert, with buses helping them to get their initial morning flush of excitement out of their systems before they enter the classroom. Buses could incorporate registers and measures to tackle behavioural issues.

Perhaps most importantly, though, when we are preoccupied with lifting ourselves out of recession and getting people back to work, this scheme would mean jobs. After five years, the number of positions in the production and running of buses would be between 12,000 and 14,000.

As has been argued in this magazine before, this small investment on the part of government in the next six months would mean an enormous gain in taking on some of the most intractable policy dilemmas that we face – all at the same time.

David Blunkett is MP for Sheffield Brightside and former Home Secretary

## 8 OFFER ALL A YEAR TO RE-TRAIN

We should offer an academic year free to all who are unemployed or who need to change jobs either to train or re-train, or who simply want to enter the labour market for the first time. Courses should be open access and tailored to employment opportunities. They could be part of a degree or simply a further education course or NVQ related.

It would help social mobility, it could be open to those without formal qualification and enable people to change direction and change their lives. It would be of benefit to those failed by the system first time round and also middle class, middle income earners who need to re train and re-orient their careers.

At a point when the economy is changing and we have rising unemployment it could be electorally popular. It could be universal and benefit related and be used as a passport to help hard pressed families change their lives.

Lord Bassam is Government Chief Whip in the House of Lords

**9** Meg Munn MP: “We could fund free school meals – a healthy breakfast at every school for those who need it, this in addition to a nutritious lunchtime meal for all pupils. Providing breakfast would help children from poorer backgrounds get a better start for the day, improving their health as well as their intellectual development.”

**10** John McDonnell MP: “Allow workers the opportunity to vote to mutualise their company by democratic ballot, thereby giving all workers a stake in their firm.”

**11** Nick Johnson, Institute for Community Cohesion: “The Government should admit the failure of the Equality and Human Rights Commission and split it into two – one anti-discrimination body and another that promotes community relations.”

**12** Polly Toynbee: “Let’s have a referendum on proportional representation to be held at the next general election so that every vote counts in every future election, not just the few thousand middling voters in a few marginal seats.”

**13** Martin Narey, Barnardos: “The Government has bailed out the banks at the taxpayers’ expense – now it is time to insist that high street banks give access to the financially excluded to avoid a lifetime of destitution and debt.”

**14** Tony Benn: “Announce a phased withdrawal of all British forces from Afghanistan.”

**15** Madeleine Moon MP: “An independent PCC watchdog has to be created to reign in the excesses of our media.”

**16** Jonathan Heawood, English PEN: “Labour should table a Free Speech Bill that builds on the universal right set out in the Human Rights Act.”

**17** John Eatwell, Queens’ College, Cambridge: “Put forward a radical plan for reform of the financial system, including the creation of an industrial development bank to provide the funds for recovery (the commercial banks won’t do this, because they have insufficient capacity to lend).”

**18** Lord Faulkner: “Labour must follow the recent announcement on railway electrification, with further decisions to electrify much more of the network and to construct a second high-speed railway, linking London with the midlands, the north of England and Scotland.”

**19** Peter Hain MP: “Go for AV in the manifesto but with no referendum”

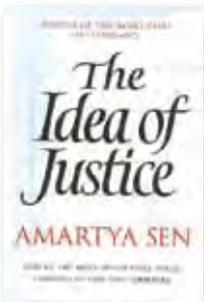
**20** Sunny Hundal, Liberal Conspiracy: “Use the web to open up and bypass the national media – otherwise Labour will forever be stuck in the same vicious cycle of briefings and trying to cosy up to right-wing journalists.”

# Justice in an imperfect world

Amartya Sen's latest  
impresses Roger Liddle



Roger Liddle  
is the new chair of  
the international  
centre-left thinktank  
Policy Network.



The Idea of  
Justice  
by Amartya Sen  
Allen Lane  
£25

Amartya Sen is one of the great public intellectuals of his age – someone who, on personal encounter, impresses as much by his humanity as his outstanding intellect. *The Idea of Justice* will become a classic of logical reasoning, drawn from an extraordinary knowledge bank of moral philosophy, economics, history and Asian as well as European culture. Do not be put off by the fact that Sen is a Nobel Prize winner in economics: there is thankfully not a mathematical equation in the book. But do not expect an easy bedtime read either.

What does Sen tell us about the deeper meaning of the social democratic values we hold dear – those of equality, social justice, and fairness? Firstly, he relates the complexity of these concepts. Sen tells a simple story to illustrate the point. Three children come across a flute lying on the ground. One immediately claims it, as she is the only one of the three who can play it. Another argues that he should have it because he is poor and doesn't have any other toys unlike the other two. The third attempts to trump the others with the revelation that in fact she had made the flute – so it must be given to her. Here we have three different and conflicting principles of fairness: the utilitarian (because the person who can play the instrument can offer the greatest pleasure to others); the redistributionist social democrat; and the libertarian who thinks that if you've built something up yourself, you should be entitled to keep it.

Labour often behaves as though we think fairness is a self-evident concept of redistributive justice. But as Patrick Diamond and I point out in our edited collection of essays *Beyond New Labour* (Politico's, 2009) this is not the case. New Labour can be criticised for largely ignoring the issue of incomes racing away at the top – but there is no clear social consensus about what rewards are deserved and undeserved. And for many working families, their strongest feelings about 'fairness' are reserved for people who are out of work and on benefits, or the procedural justice of whether and when new arrivals in the United Kingdom should enjoy welfare state entitlements, such as social housing.

Sen's analysis chips away at the logical certainties of social democratic Rawlsianism as expressed by the

'difference principle' in the American moral philosopher John Rawls's *Theory of Justice*. This is the notion that differential rewards are morally justified to the extent that the existence of incentives enables the economic position of those at the bottom of the pile to be raised.

New Labour can be criticised for largely ignoring the issue of incomes racing away at the top – but there is no clear social consensus about what rewards are deserved and undeserved

Nevertheless, Sen is a sceptic of 'transcendental institutionalists' like Rawls: the intellectual tradition that stretches from Hobbes through theories of the 'social contract' and is basically about working out what a perfectly just world would look like. This quest is about defining what the institutions and rules of such a perfect society should be. But Sen draws on a Hindu distinction between two means of justice: 'niti' which is about whether rules are just and 'nyaya' which is about whether the world is going in a fairer direction. Sen puts the stress on 'nyaya'. His focus is on righting injustices in order to bring about a better – but not a perfect – world. This is a distinct intellectual tradition in which Sen's hero is Adam Smith followed closely by John Stuart Mill, but (before one rushes to pigeon hole Sen as a classic liberal) he counts Marx in the same tradition as well.

Of course the idea that a broad and diverse range of people can unite around the righting of self-evident injustices is one of the foundation stones of our social liberal and progressive tradition. Progressives don't have to agree on everything before they muster the courage to take the next step.

Sen is attracted to his 'nyaya' approach because it enables him to think logically about the quest for global justice. For the transcendental institutionalist, global justice is a chimera

because justice depends on putting in place institutions and rules that, in the absence of world government, hardly exist at the global level. But it is in the search for principles of global justice that Sen has developed the ideas with which he is now most associated: the notion of every individual's entitlement to certain 'capabilities' which are essential to her or his essential 'functioning'.

Sen's thinking about capabilities has had a big influence on development

policy. His ideas are the inspiration behind a UN Index that attempts to measure human development: not just GDP growth per head, but modified by figures for life expectancy and basic measures of literacy.

To me there is a lot more than this in the 'capabilities' idea: we need to think harder about its application to nation state social democracy as well as global justice. Rather than pursuing an irresolvable debate between equality of

opportunity and equality of outcome, it speaks to a more individualist age. Yet, at the same time, it is worth remembering that individual 'capabilities' for those who lack them can only be enhanced through a more effective state and that the greater individual fulfilment that Sen's more "effective functioning" is seeking to bring about can only be realised in the context of a strong society where we owe obligations to each other.

# Overpaid and over here

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**Mark Townsend** finds a new examination of rich Russians in London a good read but light on revelations.



Mark Townsend is Crime, Defence & Legal Affairs Correspondent of The Observer



**Londongrad: From Russia with Cash: The Inside Story of the Oligarchs**  
by Mark Hollingsworth and Stewart Lansley

Fourth Estate  
£12.99

**Taken at face-value, the immersion of the Russian oligarchs into the capital's high society was a book waiting to be written and perhaps the greatest surprise is that it has taken until now to arrive.** The ingredients for a page-turner are in abundance: murder most foul, greed that would make Midas blush, chicanery, corruption and enough mega-yachts for a small armada.

And, true, the authors make a decent fist of presenting the pitfalls and privileges of wealth in a perfectly accessible, and at times elegant, manner. But that's about it; rather than a gritty investigation into the dubious antics of the oligarchs, Hollingsworth and Lansley seem content to arrange their version from the scores of newspaper articles indexed in its bibliography. This is an opportunity missed.

Take the murder of Alexander Litvinenko, the former Russian security officer whose death garnered international headlines and blew the lid on the seedier side of London's Russian oligarchs. Litvinenko died of polonium poisoning in November 2006 after sipping green tea in a central London hotel. Pressing questions remain about many aspects of Litvinenko's death but, regrettably, these queries remain unaddressed. Attempts to shed fresh light on the motive for murder, who ordered the execution and whether chief suspect Andrew Lugovoi is the killer are sadly not pursued, and there's little apparent evidence that attempts were made to do so. Instead the chapter, like much of the book, is broadly confined to a detailed narrative of juicy details assembled in an easily-read format.

Where, one may ask, is the interview with Lugovoi, the former KGB officer wanted by Britain for the murder? A chat with the deceased's wife Maria was surely not out of the question. Or with Alex Goldfarb, Litvinenko's media-savvy friend who helped run the PR campaign in the weeks around his friend's death. Even Chechen separatist Akhmed Zakayev, Litvinenko's neighbour and who is plugged into London's Russian quarter, appears to be an untapped resource.

**Murder most foul, greed that would make Midas blush, chicanery, corruption and enough mega-yachts for a small armada**

Rather than a definitive, revelatory account of a famous murder, the limit of ambition seems set at a historical chronology of admittedly well-researched titbits. The same scenario applies to another intriguing death, that of Stephen Curtis, lawyer to many of Britain's richest Russians, who perished in a mysterious helicopter crash near Bournemouth in 2004. Although the detailed look at the death of Curtis offers a well-written opening yarn, little new insight is provided.

Indeed, the book would have benefited had any of the main players – oil tycoons Boris Berezovsky, Chelsea football club owner Roman

Abramovich, Mikhail Khodorkovsky and metals magnate Oleg Deripaska, now famous for entertaining Peter Mandelson and George Osborne on his yacht in Corfu, agreed to an interview or forwarded a detailed statement of some description.

Even so, the stories of their formative days and their unswerving accumulation of wealth in the fall of communism are rarely less than riveting. And sections of the book do shine, particularly those exploring how the influx of roubles hiked property prices and private school fees and helped to overheat an economical bubble that would so spectacularly burst. But attempts at piecing together complex information with academic rigour are qualified by chapters where it

all gets a bit laddish. One chapter is even called "boys with toys" and proceeds to chronicle an array of big fast boats and slightly bigger faster boats.

Certainly it should be said that if the idiosyncrasies of these wealth-laden characters have passed your radar entirely, then you should consider picking this up rather than the latest crime novel. And maybe the reason for resisting the urge to dig up dirt is more prosaic: the oligarchs are famously litigious, a stance that many believe ensures the true dirt remains buried. This is far from a warts and all investigation, but if you're looking for a racy jaunt through the colonisation of the capital by rich men from the borders of Eastern Europe then this will satisfy.

## DYING FOR CHANGE

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### THE POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

**ANTHONY GIDDENS**

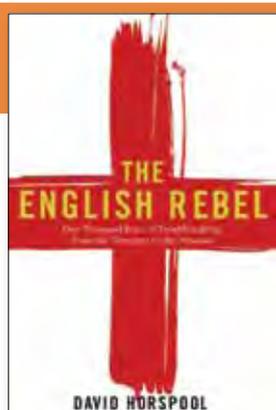
*'A landmark study in the struggle to contain climate change, the greatest challenge of our era. I urge everyone to read it.'*  
**Bill Clinton, 42nd President of the United States of America**

Political action and intervention, on local, national and international levels, is going to have a decisive effect on whether or not we can limit global warming, as well as how we adapt to that already occurring. At the moment, however, Anthony Giddens argues controversially, we do not have a systematic politics of climate change. Giddens introduces a range of new concepts and proposals to fill in the gap, and examines in depth the connections between climate change and energy security.

This book is likely to become a classic in the field. It will be of appeal to everyone concerned about how we can cope with what amounts to a crisis for our civilisation.

256 pages • 20th March 2009  
978 0 7456 4833 6 • pb • £12.99

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# FABIAN QUIZ



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## FABIAN BOOKSHELF

### What should we be reading?

Advertise your latest book, pamphlet or publication on our bookshelf. For more information contact Ed Wallis 020 7227 4911 or [ed.wallis@fabian-society.org.uk](mailto:ed.wallis@fabian-society.org.uk)

**Verdict on the Crash: Causes and Policy Implications**  
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# NOTICEBOARD

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

## The Global Change We Need Conference

With **David Miliband MP** (Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs), **Baroness Catherine Ashton** (European Commissioner for Trade), **Poul Nyrup Rasmussen** (President of the Party of European Socialists former Danish Prime Minister), **Joaquín Almunia** (European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs) and **Jennifer Palmieri** (Center for American Progress) and many more!

To purchase tickets visit:  
[www.fabians.org.uk/events/events/globalchangeconference](http://www.fabians.org.uk/events/events/globalchangeconference)

Cofunded by the European Commission. Hosted by Amnesty International. Media partners: E! Sharp and The Independent



## AGM

### Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2009

Conference hall, The Mary Sumner House (Mother's Union), 24 Tufton Street, London, SW1P 3RB

#### AGENDA

- 13.00 Doors open
- 13.15 Debate: Next Left? What does Fabianism mean today? (Speakers tbc)
- 14.15 Tea, coffee and cakes
- 14.45 Annual General Meeting
- Apologies
  - Minutes of 2008 AGM
  - Matters Arising
  - In Memoriam
  - Election results
  - Annual Report 2008-09
  - Forward programme and General Secretary's Report
  - Appointment of Auditor
  - Treasurer's Report
  - Resolutions (below)
  - Date of next AGM
  - AOB
- 16.00 Close of meeting followed by an informal social at the Westminster Arms, 9 Storeys Gate, Westminster.

## AGM RESOLUTIONS

Peter Stern:

- This AGM agrees that the rules of the Society be amended as follows: rule 9(c) to read "15 other members, of whom not more than 4 shall be members or former members of parliament, elected as provided in rule 11 following"; rule 11 to stipulate "Before the annual general meeting, the Society shall elect by ballot an honorary treasurer and 11 other members of the executive committee to hold office for one year; and by vote at the annual general meeting 4 other members of the executive committee to hold office for one year." (N.B. The effect of these changes would be to introduce a limit to the number of MPs and ex-MPs on the Executive Committee; and to remove four places from the hands of the all member ballot)
- This AGM calls on the Executive Committee to hold future AGMs in different locations in the UK.

#### Proposed by the Treasurer and Executive Committee

The annual rate of subscription for members and associates shall be £37.00; for members and associates who pay by Direct Debit the annual rate of subscription shall be £35.00. Students, retired people and the long-term unemployed may subscribe at £19.00; or £18.00 for those who pay by Direct Debit.

For catering purposes it would be helpful to know how many people are planning to attend. Please email [richard.lane@fabian-society.org.uk](mailto:richard.lane@fabian-society.org.uk) to confirm your attendance.

## FABIAN FORTUNE FUND

**WINNERS:** Eirllys Thake, £100; Geoffrey Mason, £100

Half the income from the Fabian Fortune Fund goes to support our research programme. Forms available from Giles Wright, [giles.wright@fabian-society.org.uk](mailto:giles.wright@fabian-society.org.uk)

# THE FABIANS AT LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE 2009

## FABIAN SOCIETY PUBLIC FRINGE MEETINGS

All Fabian Society public fringe events are in the Royal Albion Hotel, 35 Old Steine, Brighton.  
See our full listings at [www.fabians.org.uk](http://www.fabians.org.uk)

We'll be blogging throughout Conference at [nextleft.org](http://nextleft.org) and Twittering from @nextleft and @fabians.

### SUNDAY

Next Labour: What next for progressives?  
Sunday 3pm with James Purnell and Jon Cruddas in conversation with Mary Riddell

Unions21

LABOURLIST.ORG

YOUNG FABIANS

Do Brits Hate Benefits?  
Making the case for welfare  
Sunday 6pm with John Denham, Jemima Olchawski and Tim Horton

### COULD LABOUR WIN?

Fabian Question Time on Sunday at 8pm

On the first evening of Conference, discuss the week's big issues with Sunder Katwala, Ed Balls, Caroline Flint, Gaby Hinsliff and others.

TheObserver

THE INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

### MONDAY

Is this the last chance for a progressive coalition?  
Monday 1pm with Vince Cable, Charles Clarke, David Lammy, and Steve Richards

CENTREFORUM



Who are the new Conservatives?  
Monday 6pm with Phillip Blond, Tim Montgomerie, Fraser Nelson, Tim Horton, and Polly Toynbee



David Miliband in conversation: How Labour can win a fourth term on foreign policy  
Monday 8pm



### TUESDAY

After the Crunch: How do we beat poverty?  
Tuesday 1pm with Yvette Cooper, Iain Duncan Smith, Steve Webb, Kate Green, Mike Parker

CHILD POVERTY ACTION GROUP

SOCIAL JUSTICE

CENTREFORUM

Webb Memorial Trust



Economy Question Time:  
Put your questions to our panel  
Tuesday 6pm with Alistair Darling, Richard Lambert, John McFall and

ASDA

Rally for constitutional reform: has Labour got what it takes?  
Tuesday 8pm with John Denham and others.

Progress

compass

Electoral Reform Society

The Young Fabian reception

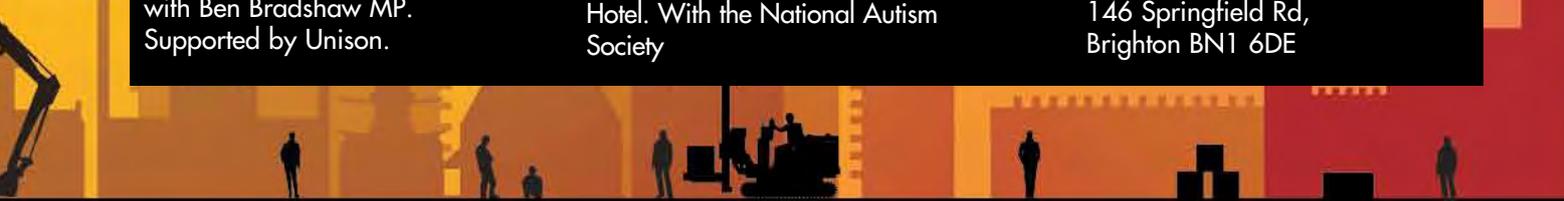
Monday from 6pm.  
At Jam, 9-12 Middle St,  
with Ben Bradshaw MP.  
Supported by Unison.

The Fabian Women's Network  
breakfast

Wednesday at 8.45am. Breakfast  
in the Sandringham Room, Hilton  
Hotel. With the National Autism  
Society

Brighton & Hove Fabians:  
Maternity worldwide debate

Monday at 8pm.  
At the Open House,  
146 Springfield Rd,  
Brighton BN1 6DE



# FABIAN POLICY ROUND TABLES

Our round table programme examines key progressive policy challenges in more depth. As space is limited, attendance is by invitation. See [www.fabians.org.uk](http://www.fabians.org.uk) for more information and post-conference reports.



Join the Fabians for just £9.95! see online for details

## Delivering on Renewable Targets: How do we collectively get to a low-carbon future?

Lord Hunt OBE (energy minister), Nicola Pitts (National Grid), Stephen Hale (Green Alliance). Chair: John Vidal (The Guardian — invited).



## Building Healthier Communities: Empowering and engaging local people in their health.

Gillian Merron MP (health minister), Prof. David Taylor (School of Pharmacy), Emily O'Brien (BHCVSF — invited). Chair: David Rose (The Times).



## Taxation and Business Transparency: Ensuring the international regulation we need.

Ian Lucas MP (minister for business and regulatory reform), Prof. Valpy Fitzgerald (Oxford University). Chair: Gillian Tett (FT — invited).



## Flexible New Deal: A new deal for Britain's Labour Market.

Jim Knight MP (employment minister), David Coats (Work Foundation), Janette Faherty (Avanta). Chair: Ashley Seagal (The Guardian — invited).



## Global Health Inequalities: How can we ensure fair access in the developing world?

Michael Foster MP (DfID minister), Dr Robert Sebbag (Vice President, Access to Medicines in Developing Countries, sanofi-aventis). Chair: Richard Vize (HSJ — invited).



## Emotional Intelligence: Who's best for improving aspiration?

Diana Johnson MP (DCSF minister), Fiona Black (NYA — invited), Tim Oates (Cambridge Assessment). Chair: Jenni Russell (The Guardian — invited).



## Nutrition & Wellbeing: Making the case of effective early intervention

Mike O'Brien MP (health minister — invited), Tim Horton (Fabian Society), Dr Gill Harris (University of Birmingham). Chair: Denis Campbell (The Guardian — invited)



## Health and Devolution: Building on successful regional practice

Phil Hope MP (health minister — invited), Shona Robison MSP (Scottish health minister — invited), Edwina Hart AM (Welsh health minister, — invited). Chair: Brian Taylor (BBC Scotland — invited).



## Social Housing & Life Chances: The economic challenge

John Healey MP (Minister for Housing and Planning); James Gregory (Fabian Society); Mark Rogers (Circle Anglia). Chair: Gail Cartmail (Unite the Union).



## Policy fringe — open public meeting

### Tackling Worklessness in an Ageing Society

Wednesday at 1pm.

Angela Eagle MP (Minister for Pensions and the Ageing Society), Andrew Harrop (Age Concern/Help the Aged), Anne Fairweather, (REC — invited), Lucie Stephens, (NEF). Chair: Michael Harris, (NESTA).



Join the Fabian Society at [www.fabians.org.uk](http://www.fabians.org.uk)

# Listings

## BIRMINGHAM

All meetings at 7.00 in the Birmingham and Midland Institute, Margaret Street, Birmingham. For details and information contact **Andrew Coulson** on 0121 414 4966 email [a.c.coulson@bham.ac.uk](mailto:a.c.coulson@bham.ac.uk) or **Rosa Birch** on 0121 426 4505 or [rosabirch@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:rosabirch@hotmail.co.uk)

## BOURNEMOUTH & DISTRICT

**21 September.** Jim Knight MP, Minister for Employment and Welfare Reform  
**30 October.** Martin Salter MP  
**27 November.** Dr Alan Whitehead MP  
All meetings at The Friends Meeting House, Wharmcliffe Rd, Boscombe, Bournemouth at 7.30. Contact **Ian Taylor** on 01202 396634 for details.

## BRADFORD

New Group forming. If anyone is interested in joining, please contact **Celia Waller** on [celiawaller@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:celiawaller@blueyonder.co.uk)

## BRIGHTON & HOVE

**Monday 28th September 8:00pm**  
The Open House, 146 Springfield Road, Brighton. TOPIC: "Maternal Mortality - Facts and Ways Forward"  
Speaker: Dr. Adrian Brown - Maternity Worldwide  
**Labour Party Conference Fabian Fringe, Friday 23rd October 8:00PM**  
Community Base, 113 Queens Road Brighton. TOPIC: Obama Campaigning Speaker: Simon Burgess - Labour PC Kempton & Peacehaven clp  
**Friday 4th December 8:00PM**  
Community Base, 113 Queens Road, Brighton. TOPIC: Education Reform  
Speaker: Dr Anthony Seldon - Wellington College  
Details from **Maire McQueeney** on 01273 607910 email [mairremcqueeney@waitrose.com](mailto:mairremcqueeney@waitrose.com)

## BRISTOL

Society reforming with regular meetings planned. For information, please contact **Rebecca Gorge** at [rg4092@googlemail.com](mailto:rg4092@googlemail.com)

## CANTERBURY

New Society forming. Please contact **Ian Leslie** on 01227 265570 or 07973 681 451 or email [i.leslie@btinternet.com](mailto:i.leslie@btinternet.com)

## CARDIFF AND THE VALE

**22 October.** The Lady Morgan Lecture will be delivered by the Rt Hon Peter Hain MP  
Details of all meetings from **Jonathan Wynne Evans** on 02920 594 065 or [wynneevans@phoncoop.coop](mailto:wynneevans@phoncoop.coop)

## CENTRAL LONDON

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

## CHELMSFORD AND MID ESSEX

New Society forming, for details of membership and future events, please contact **Barrie Wickerson** on 01277 824452 email [barrieew@laterre.wanadoo.co.uk](mailto:barrieew@laterre.wanadoo.co.uk)

## CHESHIRE

New Society forming in Northwich area. Contact **Mandy Griffiths** on [mgriffiths@valeroyal.gov.uk](mailto:mgriffiths@valeroyal.gov.uk)

## CHISWICK & WEST LONDON

8.00 in the Committee room at Chiswick Town Hall. Details from **Monty Bogard** on 0208 994 1780, email [mb014fl362@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:mb014fl362@blueyonder.co.uk)

## CITY OF LONDON

For details contact **Alan Millington** on [amillington@orrick.com](mailto:amillington@orrick.com)

## COLCHESTER

Details from **John Wood** on 01206 212100 or [woodj@fish.co.uk](mailto:woodj@fish.co.uk)

## CORNWALL

Helston area. New Society forming. For details contact **Maria Tierney** at [maria@disabilitycornwall.org.uk](mailto:maria@disabilitycornwall.org.uk)

## DARTFORD & GRAVESHAM

Regular meetings at 8.00 in the Ship, Green Street Green Rd at 8.00. Details from **Deborah Stoate** on 0207 227 4904 email [debstoate@hotmail.com](mailto:debstoate@hotmail.com)

## DERBY

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

## DONCASTER AND DISTRICT

New Society forming, for details and information contact **Kevin Rodgers** on 07962 019168 email [k.t.rodgers@gmail.com](mailto:k.t.rodgers@gmail.com)

## EAST LOTHIAN

**September (date tbc)** Visit to the Scottish National Library. Details of this and all meetings from **Noel Foy** on 01620 824386 email [noel.foy@tesco.net](mailto:noel.foy@tesco.net)

## FINCHLEY

If you're interested in joining this new Society, please contact **Brian Watkins** on 0208 346 6922 email [brian.watkins60@ntlworld.com](mailto:brian.watkins60@ntlworld.com)

## GLASGOW

Now holding regular meetings. Contact **Martin Hutchinson** on [mail@liathach.net](mailto:mail@liathach.net)

## GLOUCESTER

Regular meetings at TGWU, 1 Pullman Court, Great Western Rd, Gloucester. Details from **Roy Ansley** on 01452 713094 email [roybrendachd@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:roybrendachd@yahoo.co.uk)

## HARROW

Regular monthly meetings. Details from **June Solomon** on 0208 428 2623. Fabians from other areas where there are no local Fabian Societies are very welcome to join us.

## HAVERING

**6 October.** Dan Whittle, Director of Unions 21.  
**25 September.** Evening Tour of the Olympic Site  
Details of all meetings from **David Marshall** email [david.c.marshall.t21@btinternet.com](mailto:david.c.marshall.t21@btinternet.com) tel 01708 441189

## HERTFORDSHIRE

Regular meetings. Details from **Robin Cherney** at [RCher24@aol.com](mailto:RCher24@aol.com)

## ISLINGTON

**20 November.** Annual Dinner with guest speaker **Ray Collins**

For details of this and all meetings contact **Jessica Asato** at [jessica@jessicaasato.co.uk](mailto:jessica@jessicaasato.co.uk)

## MANCHESTER

**5 October.** Joint meeting on 'After the Crunch; How Best to Beat Poverty?'  
Details from **Graham Whitham** on 079176 44435 email [manchesterfabians@googlemail.com](mailto:manchesterfabians@googlemail.com) and a blog at <http://gtrmancfabians.blogspot.com>

## MARCHES

New Society formed in Shrewsbury area. Details on [www.MarchesFabians.org.uk](http://www.MarchesFabians.org.uk) or contact **Kay Thornton** on Secretary@[marchesfabians.org.uk](mailto:marchesfabians.org.uk)

## MIDDLESBOROUGH

New Society hoping to get established. Please contact **Andrew Maloney** on 07757 952784 or email [andrewmaloney@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:andrewmaloney@hotmail.co.uk) for details

## NEWHAM

For details of this and all other meetings **Ellie Robinson** on [marieellie@aol.com](mailto:marieellie@aol.com)

## NORTH EAST WALES

Further details from **Joe Wilson** on 01978 352820

## NORTHUMBRIA AREA

For details and booking contact **Pat Hobson** at [pat.hobson@hotmail.com](mailto:pat.hobson@hotmail.com)

## NORTHAMPTON AREA

New Society forming. If you are interested in becoming a member of this new society, please contact **Dave Brede** on [davidbrede@yahoo.com](mailto:davidbrede@yahoo.com)

## NORWICH

Anyone interested in helping to reform Norwich Fabian Society, please contact **Andreas Paterson** [andreas@headswitch.co.uk](mailto:andreas@headswitch.co.uk)

## PETERBOROUGH

Meetings at 8.00 at the Ramada Hotel, Thorpe Meadows, Peterborough. Details from **Brian Keegan** on 01733 265769, email [brian@briankeegan.demon.co.uk](mailto:brian@briankeegan.demon.co.uk)

## PORTSMOUTH

Regular monthly meetings, details from **June Clarkson** on 02392 874293 email [jclarkson1006@hotmail.com](mailto:jclarkson1006@hotmail.com)

## READING & DISTRICT

For details of all meetings, contact **Tony Skuse** on 0118 978 5829 email [tony@skuse.net](mailto:tony@skuse.net)

## SHEFFIELD

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

## SOUTH EAST LONDON

**30 September.** Dan Whittle on 'Young People and Political Engagement'  
**28 October.** Benni Dembitzer on 'The Forthcoming World Food Crisis'  
For details of all future meetings, please visit our website at <http://mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk/selfs/>

Regular meetings; contact **Duncan Bowie** on 020 8693 2709 or email [duncanbowie@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:duncanbowie@yahoo.co.uk)

## SOUTHAMPTON AREA

**18 September.** Stephen Barnes-Andrews on 'The John Lewis Partnership'  
For details of venues and all meetings, contact **Frank Billett** on 0238077 9563

## SOUTH TYNESIDE

For information about this Society please contact **Paul Freeman** on 0191 5367 633 or at [freemanpsmb@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:freemanpsmb@blueyonder.co.uk)

## SUFFOLK

For details of all meetings, contact **Peter Coghill** on 01986 873203

## SURREY

Regular meetings at Guildford Cathedral Education Centre. Details from **Maureen Swage** on 01252 733481 or [maureen.swage@btinternet.com](mailto:maureen.swage@btinternet.com)

## TONBRIDGE AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS

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

## TYNEMOUTH

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

## WATERSHED

A new Local Society in the Rugby area, details from **Mike Howkins** email [mgh@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:mgh@dmu.ac.uk) or **J David Morgan** on 07789 485621 email [jdavidmorgan@excite.com](mailto:jdavidmorgan@excite.com)  
All meetings at 7.30 at the Indian Centre, Edward Street Rugby CV21 2EZ. For further information contact **David Morgan** on 01788 553277 email [jdavidmorgan@excite.com](mailto:jdavidmorgan@excite.com)

## WEST DURHAM

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

## WEST WALES

Regular meetings at Swansea Guildhall, details from **Roger Warren Evans** on [roger@warrenevans.net](mailto:roger@warrenevans.net)

## WEST YORKSHIRE

Details from **Jo Coles** on [Jocoles@yahoo.com](mailto:Jocoles@yahoo.com)

## WIMBLEDON

New Society forming. Please contact **Andy Ray** on 07944 545161 or [andyray@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:andyray@blueyonder.co.uk) if you are interested.

## WIRRAL

If anyone is interested in helping to form a new Local Society in the Wirral area, please contact **Alan Milne** at [alan@milne280864.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:alan@milne280864.fsnet.co.uk) or 0151 632 6283

# COMMISSION POSSIBLE!

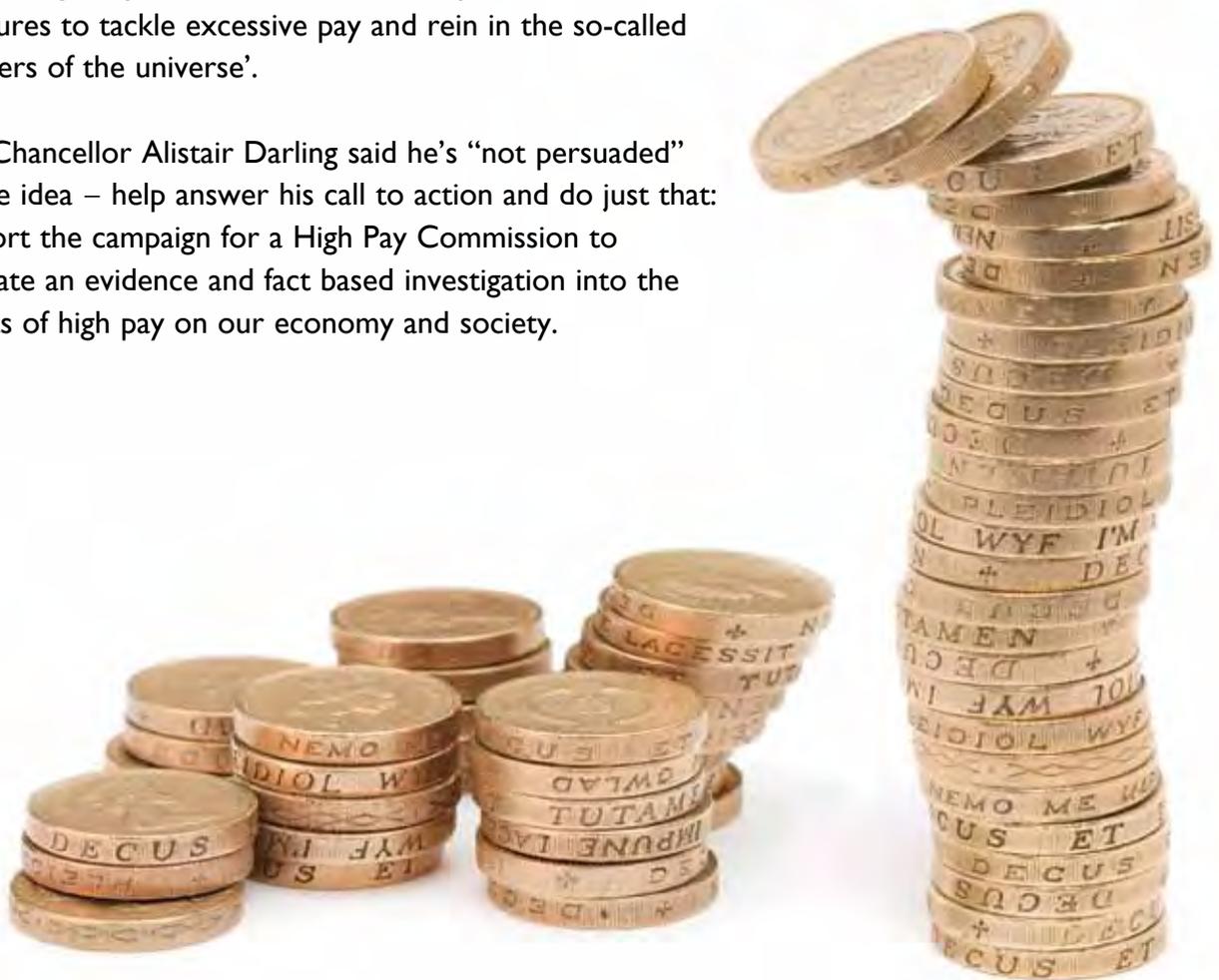
We need your support for a HIGH PAY COMMISSION

Did you know an employee on an average salary of £24,900 would have to work over 100 years to receive the same remuneration as an average FTSE 100 CEO gets in just 1 year.

**Sound fair to you?**

With the worst economic crisis since the 1930s we urgently need a High Pay Commission to come up with sensible measures to tackle excessive pay and rein in the so-called 'masters of the universe'.

The Chancellor Alistair Darling said he's "not persuaded" by the idea – help answer his call to action and do just that: support the campaign for a High Pay Commission to instigate an evidence and fact based investigation into the effects of high pay on our economy and society.



compass

This is an urgent call to Fabian Review readers to take action:  
go to [www.compassonline.org.uk/campaigns](http://www.compassonline.org.uk/campaigns)



# UNISON

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