

Fabian Review

www.fabians.org.uk

Spring 2012

HOW LABOUR WINS

Mapping
the routes
to the next
majority



THE FABIAN SUMMER CONFERENCE

Featuring a Q&A with Ed Miliband



30th June, 10am doors open for an 11am start finishing at around 5pm

Millbank Media Centre, Ground Floor, Millbank Tower, 21-24 Millbank, London, SW1P 4QP

Tickets for members and concessions are just £10 (£15 for non-members with six months free membership)

Come and join the Fabians for our Summer Conference featuring a Question and Answer session with Ed Miliband.

Debate Labour's electoral strategy and put forward your take on some of the ideas we've explored in this issue of the Fabian Review.

To book your tickets head to www.fabians.org.uk or call 020 7227 4900



Image: Adrian Teal

Age-old lessons

Andrew Harrop asks if ongoing public support for pensioner benefits offers the left a way out of its welfare impasse

If the polls are to be believed, cutting welfare is very popular. YouGov reports that fewer than a third of Labour voters and just 3 per cent of Conservatives oppose it. This places the left in a terrible bind, not least because the public offers no consistent message when it comes to what should be cut. People seem to resent money being paid to both rich and poor: a large majority support stripping child benefit from top-rate tax payers, but people most want benefit cuts for the unemployed and lone parents.

The public tell pollsters they want welfare cut because it creates dependency. But the logic of cuts is a more tightly-targeted system, available to ever less numerous and less popular groups of 'outsiders', with stricter entitlement rules which in turn create greater disincentives to work and save. On the other hand, a more universal system that removes disincentives and gives everyone a stake would almost certainly be more expensive.

Perhaps some of the lessons from old-age welfare can be applied to the rest of social security. Pensioners are the most popular group of welfare recipients – as George Osborne found out to his political cost when he delivered his recent Budget – and the state pension system now combines a careful blend of means-testing and universalism. Half of all British welfare spending goes on non means-tested

benefits for pensioners (of which the much-castigated winter fuel payment and free bus pass make up just a tiny fraction). On top there is a generous means-tested system which has done much to reduce pensioner poverty.

Our pension system has strong public support because it enshrines what in the Fabian office we term 'lifecycle welfare': contributions 'from us, to us' over time, rather than 'from us, to them' today. The whole system is sustained by automatic indexation policies, which mean that pensioner living standards rise in line with the rest of the population's.

The left needs to draw on this in framing a response to its welfare impasse. We need ideas that breathe new life into contributory 'lifecycle' welfare by making an updated offer of social insurance for when people need it most. This could include support for the costs of childcare and eldercare or an adequate salary replacement when first unemployed.

Next we must blur the boundaries between universal and 'safety net' welfare, just as has been achieved with state pensions. Labour should develop plans to turn Iain Duncan Smith's 'universal credit' into an entitlement that binds in the vast majority, for example by absorbing child benefit and childcare tax relief within it. The effect would be to realise Gordon Brown's original concept of 'progressive universalism' – where everyone gets something but

the poorest get more – which the coalition is busy unpicking though its tax credit cuts.

A shared system, where every family is a recipient, could open the way for improved provision for the poorest in a way the public might tolerate. With everyone in receipt it would become possible to introduce automatic earnings indexation without great controversy, just as Labour did with pensions. In today's climate of opinion, this is surely the only route to preventing the living standards of the poor families slipping further away from the mainstream.

Is any of this affordable? Well, we can agree on design principles, without specifying the price-tag. In tough times new welfare entitlements might need to be substitutes not supplements. However substantial savings on welfare are possible if there is radical change more widely. Big savings can come if we reduce the number of workless families by creating jobs; if we raise low pay to scale back in-work welfare; if we tackle our public health crisis so people can work longer and retire later; and if we restructure the housing market to reduce the costs of rents.

All that is possible, but it will mean the left must embrace a radical state activism aimed at building a different economy. Without economic reform, welfare will always just be sticking plaster. Little wonder the public say they hate it.

CONTENTS



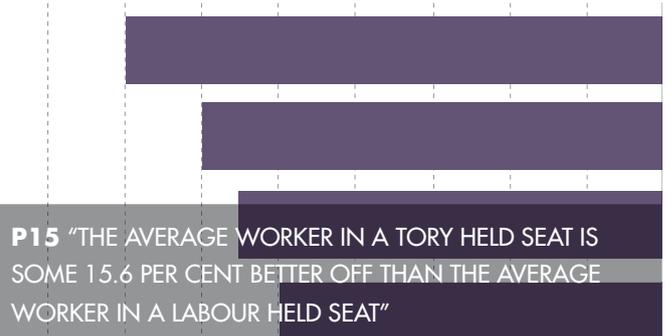
P3 "LABOUR'S NEXT MAJORITY IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL OF US"



P8 "THE BRITISH ELECTORATE WILL DECIDE WHEN THEY'RE GOING TO LISTEN TO WHAT WE HAVE TO SAY"



P11 "EVEN THOUGH MOST PEOPLE THINK THE GOVERNMENT IS DOING A BAD JOB OF MANAGING THE ECONOMY, ONLY ONE IN FIVE THINK EDS MILIBAND AND BALLS WOULD DO BETTER"



P15 "THE AVERAGE WORKER IN A TORY HELD SEAT IS SOME 15.6 PER CENT BETTER OFF THAN THE AVERAGE WORKER IN A LABOUR HELD SEAT"

What's the way for Labour to return to power? The *Fabian Review* investigates the possible winning coalitions and what they mean for Labour politics

LABOUR'S NEXT MAJORITY

- 3** Labour's next majority
Marcus A. Roberts
- 4** Achieving a progressive majority through a progressive alliance
Neal Lawson
- 5** Labour's missing five million
Paul Hunter
- 6** The many, not the few
Tessa Jowell
- 8** The Fabian Interview: Miliband's Mandelson
Mary Riddell
- 11** Which voters and how to win them
Tom Mludzinski
- 14** Labour's men have been left behind
Kirsty McNeill
- 15** The Fabian Essay: The Tory 'feelgood factor'
Duncan Weldon
- 18** The core vote, swing vote fallacy
Hopi Sen

- 21** Allow organisers to organise
Caroline Badley

BOOKS

- 22** The liminal left
Jonathan Rutherford

THE FABIAN SOCIETY

- 23** The Spring in review
- 23** Noticeboard
- 23** Listings Spring 2012
- 24** Fabian Quiz



FABIAN REVIEW

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

Editor: Ed Wallis

Printed by: DG3
London E14 9TE

Designed by: Soapbox
www.soapbox.co.uk

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

FABIAN SOCIETY
11 Dartmouth Street
London SW1H 9BN
Telephone 020 7227 4900
Fax 020 7976 7153
info@fabian-society.org.uk
www.fabians.org.uk

General Secretary: Andrew Harrop
Deputy General Secretary:
Marcus Roberts

PARTNERSHIPS AND EVENTS

Head of Partnerships and Events:
Olly Parker
Senior Programme Manager,
Partnerships and Events:
Katharina Klebba
Programme Manager, Partnerships
and Events: James Hallwood

EDITORIAL

Head of Editorial: Ed Wallis
Media and Communications Manager:
Richard Speight

RESEARCH

Senior Researcher: Natan Doron
Research Assistant: Andrea Giesecke
Research Intern: Linea Heinonen

MEMBERSHIP

Membership Officer: Giles Wright
Local Societies Officer: Deborah Stote

FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

Head of Finance and Operations:
Phil Mutero

FABIAN WOMEN'S NETWORK

Seema Malhotra
fabianwomen@fabian-society.org.uk



Marcus A. Roberts
is Deputy General
Secretary of the
Fabian Society

One day Labour will win again. When that happens, it will be because the party has changed from 2010. When Labour wins again it will be because it has a strategy that doesn't just deal with the things we feel comfortable talking about – 'fairness', international development, the NHS – but the things that Labour has traditionally struggled with: immigration, crime, welfare. We'll have a message that resonates with swing voters and core voters alike, and we'll have an organisation that respects, empowers and includes our vibrant grassroots. Our policy offer will be based on economic credibility first and foremost (with real cuts in some areas to justify some serious Keynesian spending in others) and we'll have accepted that Labour needs to stand for more than just spending ever more money on the Winter Fuel Allowance.

That's what I think anyway, others will disagree. The debate is crucial, as Labour's next majority is the responsibility of all of us. Since 2010, a range of ideas has emerged for how to take back power. But rather than just debating them, we want to really test them.

This issue of the *Fabian Review* introduces a major new Fabian project – Labour's Next Majority – which will explore three broad propositions on how an election can be won:

- the Progressive Majority theory that emphasises the importance of Liberal Democrat, Green, Nationalist and other voters in winning, outlined on page four by Neal Lawson,
- the 'Five Million Votes' argument that only one million of Labour's lost five million votes since 1997 went to the Tories, as Paul Hunter discusses on page five,
- the New Labour focus on the political centre-ground, target seats and flipping Tory votes, explored by Tessa Jowell on page six.

The project will analyse them all, considering their strengths and weaknesses and the implications and trade-offs for Labour's policies, public messaging and organisational approach as we search for a new way to win.

The ideas that underpin these theories – as well as the propositions of Labour's pressure groups like Compass and Progress, and emerging big ideas like the socially conservative Blue Labour and the fiscally conservative 'In the Black Labour' – will be examined through polling and focus groups to explore their potential impact upon

voters. The project will consider voter responses and model potential support in terms of demographic groups, socio-economic groups and geographic concentrations of voters. We'll consider how all of this plays out in terms of the party's policy proposals and public messaging, and we'll look at what this means in terms of organising choices – like considering the differing impact on turnout of leaflets, canvassing and voter registration.

But electoral strategies can't just be about parroting focus groups – after all the way you win an election has a huge impact on the way you govern. So our Labour values have to guide us through the maze of choices ahead.

A project of this scale and ambition can't be shaped by a single editor or proclaimed at one grand event or in the form of some lengthy and worthy tome. We will be taking this project to local Fabian Society meetings, CLPs, blog and twitter arguments (#nextmaj), as well as our conference with Ed Miliband on June 30th and beyond. The project will be shaped by any and all who participate. Because the power of the left is to be found not in the SW1 postcode but in the ideas and energies that exist around the country. Labour's Next Majority seeks to tap into that power and by so doing merge insider opinion with grassroots creativity to develop a new way to win for Labour. ■

Achieving a progressive majority through a progressive alliance

Labour's route back to power lies in coalition with other parties that share our values, argues **Neal Lawson**



*Neal Lawson is
Chair of Compass*

An alliance between Labour and the Liberal Democrats; who on earth, after their treachery, would want that? Surely Labour should just secure a majority and with it our historic mission?

But just before we consign such a progressive alliance to the dustbin of history, it might be worth unpacking that first paragraph; separating out raw emotion to see if delivering a good society that is more equal, democratic and sustainable could take on new forms.

Let's start with the treachery bit. Surely this is uncontestable? The Lib Dems went into coalition with the Tories, backed the cuts and broke their promise on tuition fees. But back in May 2010 it wasn't so simple. Then the greatest fear was that the Tories would go to the country again with a huge war chest and win outright, meaning no-one holding the right in check. It was a real fear. And in a voting system in which the electoral odds are stacked against you, what is the point of being the third party if you don't take a chance influencing government when it so rarely comes along? And with Labour looking tired, seemingly longing for the opposition benches, no real counter offer was made. Of course it's a case of be careful what you wish for, but you can at least understand why they made the choice they did.

And remember this in our fury against the Lib Dems. It was Labour

that started the commercialization of the NHS and education and tried to privatise the Post Office. It was Labour that pioneered welfare-to-work schemes and brought in A4e. And it was Labour that gave knighthoods to out of control bankers and promised cuts deeper than Thatcher. Oh and it was Labour that reneged on tuition fees and today backs them at £6000 per year. We should be careful about our fury just in case it smacks of hypocrisy.

Is there any downside to ensuring that if there is another hung parliament, ideas and relationships tilt the balance to the left and not again to the right?

But surely all that is redundant, as the Liberal Democrats are finished as a political force? Well maybe. But there is still a strong chance they could hold the balance of power – and anyway, if their vote collapses too far it is the Tories that stand to benefit electorally the most. Labour is not making anywhere near enough of a breakthrough. And that is before boundary changes and referendums north of the border. Is there any downside to ensuring that if there is another hung parliament, ideas and relationships tilt the balance to the left and not again to the right? Many in Labour would have much in common with Simon Hughes, Charles Kennedy, Shirley Williams and Tim Farron. The growing Social Liberal Forum and the new Liberal Left provide fertile ground for talks. Both Labour and the Liberal Democrats have their David Laws-like

neo-liberals. I bet they talk. Indeed most Labour members should have some sympathy for a party takeover by a clever elite who put office before principles. Sound familiar? Even if your only hope is to persuade as many Lib Dems as possible to vote Labour, then is that best achieved by attacking them remorselessly and relentlessly?

But any talk of a progressive alliance has to be about more than just electoral opportunism – crucial as that might be. Which takes us to the last part of the opening paragraph that's worth unpacking – what is our historic mission?

Here we have to go back to political philosophy and recognize that social democracy and indeed socialism sprang from the wide breadth of thinking that is liberalism. Liberalism starts with people and their ability to lead rich and fulfilling lives. It then split into two distinct forms: neo-liberalism heads aggressively to the market to fulfill these needs; social liberalism recognises and welcomes the role of the state in protecting people from the 'brute luck' of birth or accident, and in helping people fulfill their potential. As such it is pretty close to social democracy, which broke off in a party political sense for largely historic reasons, as the weight of the newly industrialised working class and the emerging big state gave rise to Labour.

Today we live in a very different world. Not least one in which environmental concerns are pre-eminent: it's not just Liberal Democrats that Labour should open out to but Greens as well. Intellectually and organisationally Labour will never again be the hegemonic force it was in the mid-decades of the last century. We

know that state is essential but we know too that its power needs to be curbed – think 90 day detention or the centralisation taking place in the education department. Labour in government became too remote from people and places. We offered only technical solutions to problems and stopped seeing human beings with hopes, fears and emotions. We need a rich mix of state and non-state vehicles. The state itself needs to be democratised and localised to make it ‘our state’ – so it can do its essential job of equalising out resources and opportunities but do so with our participation. We need mutuals, co-operatives, trade unions, the radical extension of economic democracy and a vast array of civil society organisations and entities to build a good society.

Labour is going to have to finesse its electoral strategy, not to talk about pacts but to have a dialogue around ideas and policies that create common ground with Lib Dems and Greens. Otherwise the common ground

will be between the Tories and Lib Dems, and Labour will be isolated. A wealth tax, economic democracy and the green new deal would be good starting points.

Even if Labour gets an outright majority it should reach out to Lib Dems and Greens. If Tony Blair had done this more effectively after 1997 then we might have been better in government and not so far out of it now. The scale of the economic, social and environmental problems the nation faces demands a broad alliance that could help transform our country. It will not be done alone.

Labourism needs a good dose of liberalism and vice versa. This is the rich terrain to rethink what it is to be on the centre-left. Given a choice, the vast bulk of the Liberal Democrats would prefer an alliance with a reformed Labour Party. Like David Lloyd George in 1931 they would “rather die fighting on the left”. And it would make sense if the vast bulk of Labour’s ranks preferred not to marginalise themselves

by refusing to talk to other parties while Cameron goes on making big bold offers.

Social democracy was once described as organised liberalism. That’s about it. The recognition that everything starts with us as individuals but we only understand ourselves as people and citizens in relation to others. “The free development of each is the condition for the free development of all” wrote Marx and Engels. We are liberal and we are social. We need a progressive alliance of minds, ideas, policies and political organisation. Just think how good the right is at making alliances across classes, business sectors and moral groups – think of that and go and do the mirror image. We live in an age of political fragmentation. Labour is a necessary but insufficient vehicle for the creation of a good society. Only a progressive alliance can deliver that. ■



Labour's missing five million

Between 1997 and 2010, Labour lost votes in all directions: understanding exactly where they all went is key winning them back writes **Paul Hunter**



*Paul Hunter is
Research Director at
the Smith Institute*

Between 1997 and 2010, Labour lost five million votes. The electoral coalition Labour had carefully nurtured in their 18 wilderness years fragmented, and with it power was lost. Votes disappeared in all directions: the Conservatives gaining 1.1 million votes, the Lib Dems 1.6 million, the BNP half a million, and 1.6 million votes were lost due to lower turnout. Understanding this disintegration is crucial to formulating a winning electoral strategy that fits with Labour values.

One of the most worrying trends that emerged from Labour’s fractured vote

was the steady and disproportionate loss of working class support. In 1997, 60 per cent of those in the lowest social group, DEs, voted Labour. By 2010 it had dropped to 40 per cent. Of C2s, skilled manual workers, by 2010 just 30 per cent voted Labour – down from 50 per cent in 1997. Indeed, in 2010 for the first time ever, more middle class than working class people voted for Labour. This obviously hurt Labour electorally, but also signalled a political rejection by those the Labour Party was formed to represent.

This drop in support should, of course, be balanced against the growing importance of middle class voters, who form the majority of the electorate, and (as polling has shown) a decline in working class self-identity. However, it would be unwise to say that class or, perhaps rather economic status, doesn’t matter. Of the four socio-economic classifications, Labour still retains its

biggest support amongst DEs.

And it is those lower earners who saw their relative wages stagnate during the New Labour years. It is arguably no coincidence either that it was those of working age who left Labour fastest. Those aged 24-55 (who represent half the electorate) dropped away from Labour twice as much as all other age groups combined.

One of the other trends was a fall in turnout from 1997 to 2010, which is closely related to lower socio-economic status. At the last election, turnout was 20 percentage points lower among DEs than ABs. This political inequality is an issue that should be addressed in and of itself (as Professor Donald Sassoon argues, socialism was not simply an economic cause but also one which sought to democratise society). Lower turnout should concern Labour for electoral reasons as well, with thousands of votes going untapped. This situation is

only likely to get worse if the government's proposals to give people the opportunity to opt-out the electoral register go through. Labour also needs to ensure that it doesn't become trapped in a downward spiral whereby those in lower socio-economic groups don't vote as much, so Labour stops shaping policies for them, and as a consequence they don't turn out to vote.

Such an all-embracing electoral strategy suggests a campaign based not only on jobs and growth, but critically on better pay for those on low and medium wages. Emphasising the need for fair pay and the creation of jobs perhaps offers a way for Labour to avoid triangulating the Conservatives' rhetoric around 'welfare scroungers', the 'undeserving poor' and labour market deregulation.

Whilst winning back votes matters, where they are distributed matters too. Analysis based on 2010 boundaries shows that Labour could not win a majority based solely on sweeping gains from Lib Dem unpopularity. Labour must also seek to win back a proportion of votes that went to the Conservatives or those lost to apathy. This multifaceted strategy seeks to repair Labour's vote, and not just nationally but also within key marginals. Understanding the needs and aspirations of voters in these marginals and articulating their concerns in common sense values, rather than a shopping list of policies, is also essential to a winning strategy.

With Labour winning just four seats in the south east in 2010, it is easy to conclude that this is why Labour lost and where the marginals must be. However, there is no evidence that

Labour suffered worse in the south east than other regions over 13 years. When analysing the percentage point change (Labour's percentage of the seats regionally in 1997 compared with 2010), Labour lost more heavily in the west midlands, east midlands, London and Yorkshire and the Humber than the south east.

Labour needs to ensure that it doesn't become trapped in a downward spiral whereby those in lower socio-economic groups don't vote as much, so Labour stops shaping policies for them, and as a consequence they don't turn out to vote.

Of course Labour needs to win seats in the south but it also has to succeed across other regions in England. New Labour's 'southern discomfort' thesis may have made sense in the early 1990s when Labour was associated with defending areas suffering brutal Thatcherite de-industrialisation. However, recent elections suggest a new approach is required. The evidence shows that in 2010 Labour suffered not from 'southern discomfort', but rather 'suburban discomfort'. Labour lost in places such as Bedford, Burton, Bury, Carlisle, Chester, Dudley, Ipswich, Lincoln, Loughborough, Milton Keynes, Northampton, Norwich, Reading, Rugby, Stafford, and Worcester – neither conventionally urban nor rural, nor exclusively in the south. And Labour

won southern cities such as London, Bristol, Southampton and Plymouth.

The clearest example of this trend was the London elections in 2008. Labour lost because Boris Johnson focused his campaign on floating voters in suburbia and won in almost every outer London borough. This is not to say that Labour should forget its traditional urban and industrial vote, but seeing Labour's electoral malaise through this prism allows for a better, more instructive understanding of the lives and issues facing those living beyond our inner cities. This means avoiding the boorish metropolitan snobbishness of London's elite, and setting out a decent offer for a suburban renaissance that works with Britain's inner cities.

Understanding why Labour lost is critical to developing a winning strategy for the next election. Re-engaging with the missing five million will demand new thinking about how to connect with those blue collar voters who chose another party, those living or wanting to move to suburbia, and those who have lost faith in the political system. At the same time, Labour needs to keep on board its more affluent supporters who are essential to securing a majority. To make this work, Labour requires more than a carefully crafted electoral strategy and will need to redefine its purpose and vision. Success will, in part, demand articulating Labour values around fair pay, place, social protection and full-employment which can reach both the squeezed middle and those on lower incomes. In these difficult and different times 'one more heave' won't be enough. ■

The many, not the few

Labour can only win if it captures the centre-ground and builds policy based on the clear consensus of the majority of people in the middle argues **Tessa Jowell**



Tessa Jowell MP is Shadow Cabinet Minister for the Olympics and London

The key to Labour winning the election in 2015 lies in believing that we can. Paraphrasing Michael Hesletine, 'Labour will win in 2015 if it wants to win'. Our party needs to radiate this desire for power and avoid a sense that it is happy in opposition.

That means making tough choices about what we oppose and what we accept, particularly on the need to reduce the deficit. It also means that we must fight every single election with the vigour we'd show in the general election. That means standing as many

candidates as possible in local government elections, giving extra support to moribund parties in the south of England and adopting an attitude that there are no no-go areas for Labour. Fundraising will be key in this period and we should look at the success of online campaigning techniques used during 2010 and in the 2012 London mayoral elections to see how we can boost the money we have from small donors.

Some people will tell you that Labour will win in 2015 by appealing to its core or working class vote. Others will say that Labour can only win with a rainbow coalition of supporters who vote for minor parties, such as the Liberal Democrats and Greens, or those who currently don't vote. The likely truth is that Labour can only win if it captures the centre-ground and builds policy based on the clear consensus of the majority of people in the middle. That is what 1997 taught us.

Voters only give politicians a mandate to govern if they feel convinced they have a positive vision for the country which taps into their aspirations for the future. Simply opposing the government lays one open to the reasonable question: but what would you do instead?

It is true that Labour focused resources on marginal seats in 1997. It makes sense in our first-past-the-post electoral system to think about where door-knocking power can be best applied. But the overall result showed that Labour increased its vote share not just in the marginal seats, but in the majority of seats. The strategy was to build a broad coalition of permission from the voters to govern the country. It is easy to characterise the approach pre-1997 as one which only listened to Conservative voters in Labour-Tory marginals. The fact is that the policy platform we stood on was entirely focused on 'the many, not the few'.

Cutting class sizes, fast-track punishment for persistent young offenders, cutting NHS waiting times, 250,000 young people off benefit and into work, and a pledge not to increase income tax – these were all policies which had a broad appeal to voters across the piece. These pledges, which were memorably encapsulated on a wallet friendly card – the result of a trip across the pond by Margaret McDonagh and

Alan Barnard, who were impressed with something similar from a teachers union in the US – were not dreamt up to pick off different groups of voters, but were the result of three years of consultation and policy work.

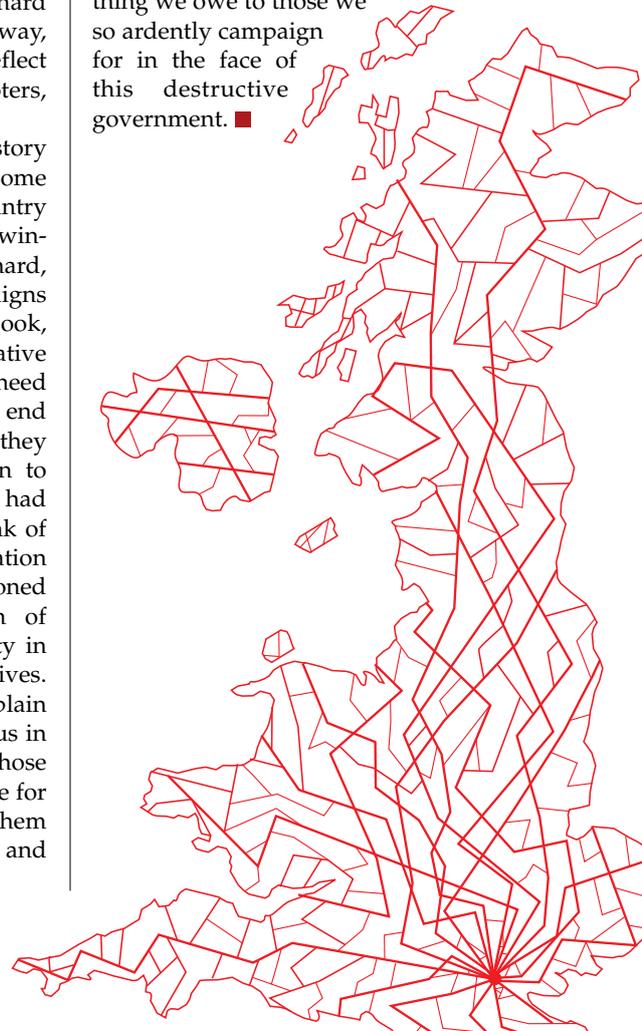
Liam Byrne's current policy review process emulates this important period of reflection. The first lesson we can learn from that work pre-1997 is that the policies we peg on the washing line must be the result of detailed and dedicated research and analysis; using focus groups, consulting with external organisations, and a process of constant testing and refining of the offer. The end result will of course have to be concluded by the leadership of the Labour party, but the process will be crucial.

The second key lesson from 1997 is that voters only give politicians a mandate to govern if they feel convinced they have a positive vision for the country which taps into their aspirations for the future. Simply opposing the government lays one open to the reasonable question: but what would you do instead? Tony Blair instinctively understood this. He sought to prove that economic efficiency and social justice could go hand in hand, that Labour could be pro-business, pro-jobs and pro-growth, at the same time as securing employment for all, giving people greater protection at work and higher support if they fell on hard times. Characterised as the third way, this was a deliberate strategy to reflect the ambitions of a majority of voters, not just Tories.

Third, Labour needs to have a story to tell in 2015 of where it has come from and where it wants the country to be. Narrative is important to winning any campaign. As Alan Barnard, Labour's former Director of Campaigns and Elections, writes in his latest book, *Campaign It!*, "The campaign narrative develops the understanding we need our target audience to have by the end of the campaign, or sooner, so that they are willing to give us permission to succeed." Labour's story by 1997 had been one which took it to the brink of destruction, through the modernisation of our communication which jettisoned divisive policies, to the reform of Clause IV which brought the party in tune with the majority of people's lives. By 2015, Labour must be able to explain we know why the public rejected us in 2010, what we have done to learn those lessons and the new vision we have for the country. We will need to tell them who we are, what we stand for and what we will do for them.

Of course Labour will need to pick its geographical priorities the closer we get to 2015, but until then we should adopt a strategy more akin to what Barack Obama did before the presidential election in 2008 and build a broad base of support on the ground. It is possible that had Labour pursued a general rather than a key-seat election strategy in 2001, our contact levels in 2010 wouldn't have been so poor. It is telling that those seats which bucked the swing against Labour were those with strong leadership from their MPs and councillors, who dedicated immense amounts of time to talking to voters between elections. Take Gisela Stuart in Birmingham Edgbaston, Emily Thornberry in Islington South or Ian Austin in Dudley, for example: these MPs held on to their seats against the tide. Picking candidates who have grit under their fingernails, and who can translate our policy priorities into themes which resonate with the public will be key.

In 2010 Labour suffered its worst defeat since 1983. The road back to government will be hard, but it needn't be long. New Labour's success in 1997 – and twice thereafter – is just as relevant now, though the policy and political outlook is markedly different. We should be proud of aspiring to power, because in doing so we seek to turn our dreams into reality – something we owe to those we so ardently campaign for in the face of this destructive government. ■



Miliband's Mandelson

Ed Miliband made **Tom Watson** an offer he couldn't refuse when he asked him to become Labour's campaign co-ordinator. The Brownite heavy-hitter tells **Mary Riddell** he has a surprising source of inspiration: Peter Mandelson



Mary Riddell is a columnist for the Daily Telegraph

Arriving at Tom Watson's office, I am met by a wall of flapping shirts. Behind a tangle of wire coathangers is the aide who has kindly agreed to pick up what appears to be a fortnight's supply of Watson washing. "More like a month's worth," says the assistant, puffing slightly.

In life, as in laundry, the MP for West Bromwich East does not do things by halves. In addition to being one of the most prominent campaigners against phone hacking, he was beguiled by Ed Miliband into becoming Labour's campaign co-ordinator for the local and London elections, as well as the party's deputy chair and a member of the shadow cabinet. Whether Labour wins the general election may depend, in large part, on Watson's instincts.

Having got wind of an imminent offer from Ed Miliband, Watson had resolved to turn it down. "I'd decided I just wasn't interested. Then I walked into his office and capitulated instantly. It's hard to say no to a leader of the Labour party. I'd resigned under Tony Blair, then Gordon asked me to come back, and actually I shouldn't have said yes. With Ed, I just want him to win. I love running elections; he flattered and cajoled me, and I said I would do it.

"I'll hopefully make a difference for him, but it's not something I desperately wanted. I'm doing it out of a sense of loyalty to Ed, really, but I'm not particularly ambitious in that way." Do not be deluded by this show of diffidence. Ambivalent as Watson might have been about his new brief, his reputation is formidable. Part enforcer, part diplomat and part tribalist, he is steeped in the culture of the party (his first job for Labour was in 1984) and the unions (he worked for the AEEU until he won his seat in 2001).

Of the challenges Watson faces in the run-up to May 3, the London mayoral election seems the most prominent. Ken Livingstone's diligence will, he hopes, give him the edge. "He has a lifetime of experience, and he's the guy who gets up an hour earlier than everyone else to get the work done. Boris is very brilliant, a great orator but not a detail man." That tribute to Livingstone aside, Watson sounds cautious. Labour, he says, is being outspent by "more than ten to one."

What about Ken's tax affairs? "He's given an explanation. But it [lost us] a week of talking about the issues." Can Ken win? "It's too close to call. But he's a remarkable character. I didn't actually know Ken well until I was involved in this campaign." Are they kindred spirits? "I don't know about [that], but I have a lot more in common with him than I thought I had. Not least is that I think we [were under surveillance by] the same News International private investigator at one point."

Then there is the Cat Stevens connection. "Ken is a massive fan. I find myself having conversations with him about *Tea for the Tillerman*. Anyway, he's an incredible force, and everyone wrote him off. He was ten or 12 points behind, and that's pretty hard to recover from, but he's done it. It's there to be won. If I'm sounding reticent, it's that ... it will be a very negative campaign, very personal to Ken, and they'll try and traduce his character. That's hard to deal with if we haven't the resources or firepower to launch back."

On the local elections, Watson – speaking before the Bradford west rout – thinks Labour needs to gain 350 seats

in England "to be credible" and "probably 100 in Wales", as well as making headway in Scotland. Although his specific task is to oversee the campaign until May, it seems clear that he is thinking much further ahead. Asked how indicative the results will be of Labour's fortunes in the general election, he says: "[They mean] everything and nothing. We've got to make gains, but there's still a lot of work to do after that."

Rather curiously for a Brownite heavy-hitter, Watson's methods are drawn from quite another tradition. "I want to have realistic staging posts up to the next election. That is classic Mandelsonian planning, by the way. I can't believe that I am saying this, [but] he was very good, and his strength was [judging] realistic increments of change."

Watson, who first joined the Labour payroll as a teenage librarian in the mid-eighties, was a witness to "rampant, powerful and personal divisions that make all the current stuff look like tittle tattle. I do try and get colleagues to reflect on that. There's a massive ambition for change within the shadow cabinet, and sometimes you just have to say that the British electorate will decide when they're going to listen to what we have to say. Right now, you can only get issues up and running."

There's a massive ambition for change within the shadow cabinet, and sometimes you just have to say that the British electorate will decide when they're going to listen to what we have to say. Right now, you can only get issues up and running

This view seems to accord much more closely with the long view taken by Ed Balls than with the impatience of some more Blairite figures. But on one issue, Watson appears at odds with Balls. In his Fabian speech at the start of this year, the shadow chancellor startled colleagues and enraged some union leaders by endorsing a public sector wage freeze and refusing to guarantee reversing any Tory cuts. "For Ed Balls to harden his language around [cuts] is part of re-establishing economic credibility. Sometimes you get those shifts wrong or sometimes you can do it too quickly.

"We have social partners who have a lot of members with an interest in this, and they were shocked and taken aback." Presumably he means the unions? "Yes, but also local government employees, many of whom are Labour councillors and leaders. What we did wrong was not to signal adequately what we were doing and the timing of doing it.

"What Ed is saying is: let's be realistic. We've got to be tough on public sector pay because we want to keep people in work. That's absolutely the position we have to be in. There are times when trade unions are going to be unhappy with Labour decisions, in opposition as well as in government. We owe it to them to disagree respectfully and to let them know rather than to throw it on their doorstep in their Sunday paper. We had to do what we did in January. There's no doubt about that, but we could have [done] it better, and I think we'd probably acknowledge that."

Is Watson, who is said to be very close to Len McCluskey, the point of contact for aggrieved union leaders? "Well, sometimes they [speak to me]. I've worked for a trade union, and I have a massive regard for some of the general secretaries. I think Paul Kenny is a truly great industrial leader. But people can tell Ed Balls what they think directly. They don't have to come through me."

Nor would Watson have any compunction, he says, in speaking to Miliband and Balls if he thought they were wrong.

"They're my friends and I respect them, but I want to make sure that, wherever possible, we don't surprise our natural allies. It's a law of good politics, [and] there's no bigger argument than that. It's just [about] respect and manners, really."

Although he claims to have discerned growing dissatisfaction on the doorstep from voters uneasy about the Tories, especially on youth unemployment and the health service, Watson is under no illusions about the obstacles on any road back to government. He has spoken in the past of Labour's lack of appeal to elderly voters; others have focused on the party's declining allure in the south-east. How does he assess the vacuum of five million voters who drifted away from the party from 1997 onwards?

There are times when trade unions are going to be unhappy with Labour decisions, in opposition as well as in government. We owe it to them to disagree respectfully and to let them know rather than to throw it on their doorstep in their Sunday paper.

"By not wanting to generalise about where the lost voters are. A number of working families say that Labour used to be for them and it isn't any more. To me that's serious, but still a half-full bottle. They still think we're their natural party, but they're disappointed. We're making the case that we're with them, and Ed Miliband is very important on that. But we've also got to reach the south, and that's about our offer to fairly affluent, aspirational families as well. I've been ringing voters in the leafy suburbs, and they're as worried about the economy as they are about tuition fees and police numbers. So it's not as if all the issues are different."

On Scotland, where the independence fight will take off after the elections, he is clear that there is no leading role for Westminster incomers. "The people who should lead the campaign in Scotland are in Scotland," he says. "We've got to devolve decision-making to Johann [Lamont, the Scottish Labour leader] ... We've got to let go in London. The idea that me or Jim Murphy or Douglas Alexander can run campaigns [out of] Victoria Street headquarters is gone."

Even Alistair Darling and Gordon Brown should, he suggests, have bit-part roles. "Their interventions on the future of Scotland are really important ... but I'm absolutely clear that Johann Lamont will make the calls; otherwise we're going to undermine our colleagues north of the border."

Does Watson still see Gordon Brown, to whom he was once so close? "Sporadically. He's travelling the world and trying to make a difference in his own way." And did Brown, now an almost spectral presence at Westminster, feel embittered at the end of his bruising tenure or simply relieved that it was all over? "I don't know. I think he probably felt responsibility and that he had let people down. That's a very human response. Not all of it was his fault. He loves the Labour party and he has a sense of duty to his country. He did go through a hell of a time, but he doesn't talk about it much."

"I did his fund-raising dinner not long ago, and he joked that in the film of the hacking inquiry, Tom Watson will be played by Rab C Nesbitt. There might be some truth in that. Anyway, he hasn't lost his sense of humour."

While phone hacking turned some celebrities into victims, the affair had the opposite effect on Watson, whose interventions have made him a media star. He is an "obsessive" watcher of the Leveson Inquiry and has "quite a lot of confidence in [Lord] Leveson finding remedies to protect the

integrity of a free press but also ensuring rules of behaviour that we all think are appropriate."

This, he is certain, will involve a call for statutory regulation. "There will be a point when it comes to parliament, and I'm pretty certain that, whatever happens, there will have to be some sort of legislation. There will be unbearable pressure [not to legislate] on David Cameron in particular, and also Nick Clegg and Ed Miliband. That's the big moment; that's the next moment. Will they duck it or not? I honestly don't know."

While not wishing to "pre-empt" Leveson, he foresees "some sort of independent, arm's-length regulations with a little bit of legislative teeth." Like Ofcom? "Or the Advertising Standards Authority. I think it's quite likely they're going down that route. That's going to be a big moment for parliament." Despite his doubts on whether either leader will back statutory regulation, Watson has "more faith in Ed since he went to PMQs and asked for the BSkyB bid to be shelved."

Did Watson prod him to take on Rupert Murdoch? "Well, I did prod him, but I was prodding anyone who'd listen to me." Miliband's willingness to challenge the media tycoon has certainly earned Watson's esteem. "[I'm] not decrying the other people who ran against him for the leadership because I admire them and they're friends, but I think he's probably the only one who would have made that call. To me that was a massive moment, and I owe him a great debt of loyalty for his courage in doing that"

Few in Labour would dispute the desirability of having Tom Watson on one's side. While he has likened James Murdoch to a mafia figure, many colleagues have also discerned a whiff of the godfather in Watson. Does he recognise that characterisation? "It's been said for a long time. I don't recognise it myself. I sometimes think that because I'm overweight with this Bummy twang, it's very easy to get patronised."

It seems fair to say that Watson, despite his jovial manner, is more likely to be feared than belittled. When his intern tweeted an ill-advised comment from his phone, speculation about whether she would be fired became so acute that a Twitter campaign (#savetheintern) was launched to preserve her job. Anxious tweeters may be relieved to know that Watson's assistant not only kept her post but is there still.

I'm pretty certain that, whatever happens in the Leveson Inquiry, there will have to be some sort of legislation. There will be unbearable pressure [not to legislate] on David Cameron in particular, and also Nick Clegg and Ed Miliband. That's the big moment. Will they duck it or not?

"There was no way I was going to sack her for that. She's very hard-working and committed, and she did something silly. There were plenty of things I did when I was her age that would have got me the sack. It was all about faux outrage. I really enjoy social media. I love the idea of serendipitous knowledge transfer, but you've also got to stick to your guns when these things afflict you."

If serendipity is not generally seen as Tom Watson's strongest suit, obduracy is another matter. While Labour's most hardened fighter never takes victory for granted, in May or on the long road ahead, nor does he see failure as an option. ■

Which voters and how to win them

For Labour to win again, a sound understanding of the demographic, socio-economic and geographic blocks that comprise a winning coalition will be necessary. We asked a range of politicians, thinkers and activists: which group of voters holds the key to the next Labour majority? And what does Labour need to do to win these voters? Overleaf are their answers. But first **Tom Mludzinski** investigates what the numbers tell us



Tom Mludzinski is Deputy Head of Political Research at Ipsos MORI @tom_mlud



At a general election, it is only a small number of **marginal seats** that decide victory. The Conservatives are reportedly focussing on just 100 seats for 2015. Our polling in the key marginal constituencies in the month before the 2010 general election shows that while voters in these constituencies were targeted (95 per cent of those in marginal constituencies had political leaflets through their letterbox in the last two weeks of the campaign), their voting intentions remained largely stable. This suggests the campaign itself hardly persuaded voters to change their minds.



Labour will need to keep an eye on **Scotland**; independence would have a considerable impact on Labour's electoral hopes at Westminster. Labour hold 35 seats in Scotland compared to the Conservatives' one. While there is likely to be a reduction as part of the boundary changes, Labour will struggle to win a majority without any Scottish seats. And what would happen to senior Labour MPs holding Scottish seats? Politically, Ed Miliband is right to want to keep Scotland in the Union, but come the referendum campaign he must be careful about potential backlash against an English politician campaigning against independence in Scotland.

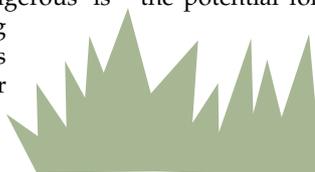
Ed Miliband must focus on energising, enthusing and motivating **the Labour base**. Our February poll showed that for the first time more Labour supporters are dissatisfied with Ed Miliband than are satisfied. To place these findings into context, eight in ten Conservatives are satisfied with David Cameron. But even he encountered a rocky patch among his own supporters when in opposition: his ratings began a downward trend shortly after he became leader and at one point in 2007 he dropped 26 points in a month among Conservatives and into negative numbers. He managed to turn it around, and Gordon Brown proved it's not the



Before assessing the next majority, **how did Labour lose** the last one? The Conservative party won in almost all age groups, drawing level with Labour and the Liberal Democrats among 18-24 year olds and making significant gains from Labour among voters aged under 44. Perhaps most significant for Labour were the losses suffered among the working classes, dropping 11 points from 2005 to 2010 among C2 voters and 8 points among DEs. Clearly these are important groups of voters that Labour need to work to bring back to the party.

The working classes are a traditional stronghold for Labour. However, they are decreasing in number as we become more middle class as a nation; in 2010 Labour actually won more votes from the middle classes than the working classes. This is a key point for Labour strategists – their traditional supporters are diminishing and they will have to reposition themselves to be able to appeal to middle class voters while not alienating their traditional core.

The **boundary review** of constituencies will have a significant impact on the electoral map if it passes through parliament. Currently, the Conservatives stand to lose seven seats, Labour 28 and the Lib Dems 11. Not only does this reduce – although not eliminate – Labour's inbuilt electoral advantage, it may have an impact that cannot be easily predicted. The re-jigging of boundaries means a number of current MPs will take over new patches where perhaps their base is less secure. Perhaps even more dangerous is the potential for in-fighting as MPs battle over constituencies.



only thing that is needed to win an election (more Labour supporters were satisfied with him than were dissatisfied). But Team Miliband does not want to be distracted by having to win the backing of his own supporters rather than focussing on winning over those he needs to achieve a majority.



The **good news** is recent Ipsos MORI polls show the Labour Party ahead. And based on aggregate data across our polls in the second half of 2011,

Labour now hold significant leads over the Tories among all the age groups apart from those aged 65 and over. Labour also regained their lead among the C2s, that all important group that was lost in 2010. It is these groups, those who are particularly dissatisfied with the coalition, who are there for the taking (though it is interesting to note that they are as satisfied, and dissatisfied, with Ed Miliband's leadership as is the general public). The coalition government leaves Labour as the only viable opposition party, and they should have a monopoly over anti-government sentiment.



However, the Conservatives are more trusted on **the economy** (the number one issue to voters) than Labour, and even though most people think the government is doing a bad job of managing the economy, only one in five think Eds Miliband and Balls would do better.



We are three years out from a general election and Labour are ahead in the polls, even if Ed Miliband has not yet connected with the public. With no competition for space in the opposition, a government making large public spending cuts in a tough economic climate, many contend Labour should be further ahead. There is time to establish Labour as a positive and credible alternative, but for their message to be taken seriously Labour cannot just wait for the electoral cycle to turn to them.

Success for Labour will not only lie in making sure those who are unhappy with the government have somewhere to turn to, but also in giving 2010 Conservative voters a positive reason to vote Labour in 2015. ■

Lance Price, Labour's former director of communications:

The key is – clearly – to win back those voters who have supported us in the past because they share our values but who didn't vote for us in 2010 or 2005. Rather than exaggerating the failings of New Labour, better to analyse what it was about it that attracted so many people and what retains its relevance today. You can call it what you like, but it is about fairness and equality, a commitment to protect their personal security as well as our national security, and an approach to the economy that is not ideological but is focused on sustainable growth, employment, consumer protection and fairness in the workplace.

Lord Lipsey: The idea of targeting groups is fatuous nonsense. Elections in post-class politics are won voter by voter not group by group. The way to maximise the Labour vote is in principle simple though in practice challenging: to construct a broad appeal which a majority of voters see to be in the national interest as well as in their own.

Kate Green, shadow equalities minister:

Ethnic minority voters have traditionally supported Labour, but we mustn't take them for granted. If we're seen as a party that doesn't value success, we risk losing the support of thriving and increasingly prosperous communities. But we're the party that values diversity and champions equality, and we know BME voters face the greatest risk of poverty. Our offer should be based on the moral case for good growth that delivers greater equality.

Peter Kellner, president of YouGov:

Bill Clinton was right: building a progressive majority by assembling support from specific groups is an old, failed strategy. Labour should appeal to the whole country.

John Mann MP: Labour needs to go in search of the 1997 lost souls: those who now abstain.

Patrick Diamond, Senior research fellow at Policy Network:

Labour has to show women in southern and midland's marginals in the 18-40 age bracket that it can manage the nation's finances, so as to help them with their family finances. It can't promise big giveaways but can take steps to make life a little easier, through taking those on low incomes out of tax, childcare subsidies, boosting the minimum wage, expanding employment opportunities, and so on.

Alan Finlayson, professor of political and social theory at UEA:

Not every person who votes Labour is a Labour person and they don't need to be. Accept this pluralism and remember that to lead a coalition, sometimes you have to follow.

Alison McGovern MP: The Conservatives in government are showing that they will not back low and middle income families. The IFS has shown that the median income will fall significantly by the end of the parliament: Ed Miliband was right about the squeezed middle. So we have to be clear on the specific policy changes Labour would make to address this: whether a VAT cut or help through tax credits, we'll need to offer a clear difference worth voting for.

Rowenna Davis, journalist: Labour needs to realize this country is small and conservative. And that's beautiful.

Chris Bryant MP: The first step is to make sure every Labour member and supporter can talk confidently about immigration.

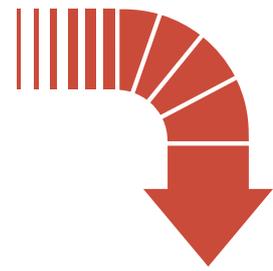
Roger Liddle, chair of Policy Network: The essential foundation for a forward looking agenda is an honest explanation of why we lost in 2010 and a credible analysis of what we got right and wrong in government, just as New Labour did in the mid-90s. In particular we have to persuade the middle and lower income voters we lost massively last time that on jobs, living standards, public services and fairness they can trust in our competence better than the Conservatives, while rebuilding a broader progressive coalition.

Alex Smith, co-editor of Labour's Business: Labour as a party – MPs, councillors, political advisors and lay members – has to put itself in the mindset of small and medium enterprise. That means supporting entrepreneurship in schools, adopting liberal tax and regulation stances, adapting its language and organisational culture to be more appealing to business, and embracing risk as a positive characteristic.

Kevin Hickson, senior lecturer University of Liverpool: The best, if not only way for Labour to win is by not being afraid to voice its social democratic principles of equality, social justice and an active state, which will appeal to all those who fear for their future well being and rightly have a deep sense of unfairness against the privileges of those at the top of society.

Paul Richards, Progress columnist: Labour must camp on the centre ground, and win back support from working people, in the suburbs and towns, especially in the south of England. We must win the votes of people who don't belong to a union, have never been to Scotland, or heard of Polly Toynbee and never read Fabian Review.

Mehdi Hassan, New Statesman: Labour has to win back the 4 million voters who deserted the party under Blair and the million who left under Brown. Then, victory beckons.



Labour's men have been left behind

Labour needs to secure its next majority with jobs for the boys says **Kirsty McNeill**



Kirsty McNeill is a consultant advising progressive organisations on strategy, advocacy, and organisational development. She is on the Management Committee of Labour Women's Network and was a Downing Street adviser on external relations, speech-writing and equalities.

The preoccupation of both Tory strategists and Labour feminists with women voters can't disguise Labour's challenge: we've got man trouble.

Reversing the historic Tory lead with women was, of course, crucial to New Labour's political project: a party cannot be a plausible 'political wing of the British people' by appealing to just one gender any more than one region or class. But Labour's 1997 female flip is not enough to stack up the argument, widely heard in Labour circles, that it is women (and by implication somehow only women) who win Labour elections. At the 2010 election, as in 2005, women were still more likely than men to vote Labour. In other words, we didn't lose the 2010 election because we haemorrhaged women's support, but because we didn't turn out enough women to counteract our decline with men.

I'm proud to be a Labour feminist and, with Labour Women's Network, to be developing the next generation of feminist leaders; a tested, tough and talented cadre coming soon to a selection process near you. But for this to be a contribution not a capture, we need to face facts.

Firstly, while we should be proud of our record on issues from domestic violence to human trafficking (and when returned to government we should do more), we need to be honest about which policies are big vote winners with Britain's women. Now David Cameron has appointed a women's special adviser as my successor in Number 10 she'll find, as I did, she learns more from *Take a Break* magazine than from NGOs about what women really want. While female

voters consistently put immigration and crime in their top five concerns, feminist staples like pornography and women's imprisonment simply don't get a polling look in.

Secondly, even if 21st century feminism had been the way to women's hearts, we still need an offer for the other half of the electorate. As the first government to introduce paid paternity leave we had a coherent account of progressive fatherhood – but our family policy was, in reality, a labour market policy in disguise, designed to attract unprecedented numbers of mums to the workforce. That is a progressive public policy objective for which we should never apologise – and one we should never allow to be pitted as an either/or choice with progressive policy aimed at men.

But it is time to admit that while Labour was relatively quick to understand and shape the policy imperatives around women's accelerating entry to the workplace, we were far too slow to grasp (far less try to mould) the way in which globalisation and the decline of collective bargaining changed the nature of masculinity at work. Traditional 'male' jobs characterised by skill, status and stability have broadly disappeared: work in mines, yards and plants has been replaced with high turnover, insecure service industry jobs for which boys compete with the girls who outperformed them at school and outnumbered them at college.

Male displacement is not in itself a problem (after all girls' exam outcomes were improving at the same time as Labour's investment in state education was producing record results across the board, and that the majority of students

are now women should rank with the franchise and the pill as great social revolutions of the last 100 years). But social displacement becomes a toxin when combined with social dislocation. The old routes of male socialisation – the working men's club, the works football team, the trade apprenticeship and the union meeting – have largely been diluted or destroyed by a globalisation which sees work as simply a mechanism for realising shareholder value and not as a test of societal stake.

Our family policy was, in reality, a labour market policy in disguise, designed to attract unprecedented numbers of mums to the workforce.

On the release of new Institute for Fiscal Studies and Resolution Foundation findings last year, Gavin Kelly commented that between 2002 and 2008 "women's employment served to raise household incomes... but these gains were almost completely wiped out by losses from male employment income." In other words, male wage stagnation and unemployment left a generation of men – Labour's men – behind. If we are to avoid paying a further electoral price for that, we need to name the problem and convince men we intend to fix it. A vigorous industrial strategy (of the sort only Labour has the appetite to deliver) is part of the policy answer – but it won't bring home the political goods until we are comfortable talking about jobs for the boys.

Labour began as a working man's party, set up to guarantee for the working class male a chance to secure both an income and an identity. This is a proud part of our heritage – and a profoundly progressive one. Today it should lead us to build Labour's next majority by bringing men back home to Labour – in the service of our progressive politics, not in spite of them. ■

The Tory 'feelgood factor'

Despite the bleak national economic picture, people in Conservative held seats are doing better than those in Labour areas. **Duncan Weldon** warns that any Labour strategy aimed at channelling popular anger over poor economic performance needs to take this into account.



Duncan Weldon is an economist

The Conservatives have form when it comes to winning re-election whilst presiding over deep cuts in public spending, high unemployment and often sluggish growth. As an excellent pamphlet – *Cameron's Trap* by shadow minister Gregg McClymont and academic Ben Jackson – has argued, both Stanley Baldwin in the 1930s and Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s were able to achieve this feat by ensuring that living standards rose for enough of the population to ensure a viable electoral coalition.

The circumstances today are outwardly similar – a Tory-led coalition has brought forward major public spending cuts whilst unemployment has risen and the economy has weakened. And as in the 1930s and 1980s, the terrible national statistics camouflage a more nuanced regional picture.

The 1930s are often remembered as the decade when unemployment passed 20 per cent, but it was also the decade of expanding car ownership, regular holidays by the seaside for many families and the growth of a mass market in domestic appliances such as vacuum cleaners, radios and washing machines. The Jarrow marchers of 1936 set off from an area extremely badly hit by the downturn in coal mining and ship building. But on their way to London they passed through areas such as Bedford and Luton, both of which were benefitting from the growth of new light industries and were relatively prosperous.

Similarly the 1980s saw unemployment pass the three million mark but champagne sales doubled to twenty million bottles a year. Television of the time featured not only *Boys from the Blackstuff* marking the impact of unemployment on Merseyside but also Harry Enfield's comic character *Loadsamoney*, who, crucially, was not a city banker but a plasterer.

It is all too easy, when examining the 1980s or the 1930s to concentrate on the often appalling national economic figures and assume that no government could ever win re-election whilst overseeing such a mess. As Jackson and McClymont remind us, that would be a mistake.

All politics is local

There is a danger that something similar could be happening now. The recession of 2008-09 and the weak recovery since have affected the different regions of the UK to quite different extents. We are not, as the chancellor is so keen to tell us, 'all in this together'.

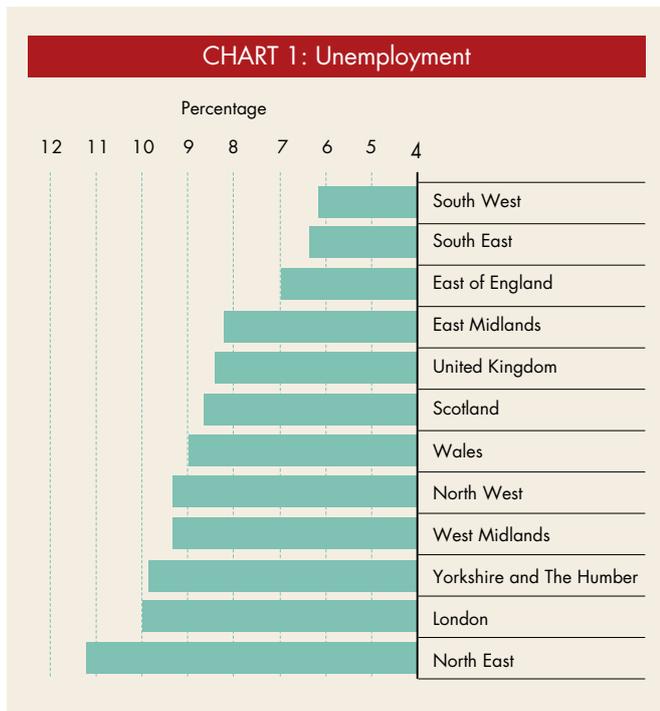
According to the most recent figures, unemployment stood at 8.4 per cent (on the International Labour Organisation measure) at the end of 2011, its highest rate since 1995. Youth unemployment is over one million and long term unemployment is rising.

Jonathan Portes, a former chief economist at the Cabinet Office and the current head of the widely-respected National Institute of Economic and Social Research, has convincingly argued that the 'unemployment gap' in this recession and recovery has been the highest and longest of any period since the Second World War. That is to say, the gap between what the unemployment rate actually is and where it would be if macroeconomic conditions were 'normal' is unusually large. Government policy should be focussed on bringing this gap down and so Labour is surely right to be arguing for policies focussed on 'growth and jobs'.



© ITV/Rex Features

The 1980s saw unemployment pass 3 million but also Harry Enfield's Loadsamoney character



But, if unemployment is at a 17 year high then surely there should be less support for the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats than opinion polls currently suggest?

To start answering this mystery we need to remember the lessons on the 1930s and the 1980s and delve into the regional figures. Here we see quite a different picture, as summarised in the chart above: Unemployment in traditional Labour areas is currently much higher than in traditional Conservative areas. In North East England it is 11.2 per cent, in Yorkshire and the Humber it stands at 9.9 per cent, in the North West at 9.3 per cent and in Wales at 9.0 per cent. By sharp contrast, unemployment in the South West is 6.1 per cent, in the South East it is 6.5 per cent and in the East of England it is 7.0 per cent.

To give some sense of the data, whilst the UK's overall level of unemployment is comparable to that of the struggling USA, the picture in the south is actually far closer to that of booming Germany. Meanwhile in the north, the best comparators are crisis-hit Bulgaria or Hungary.

It is, of course, hugely important to avoid crude caricatures when discussing the regional picture; it's not simply a case of it 'being grim up north' and fine in the south. The north has its share of bright spots whilst the south has pockets of weaker data and higher deprivation, but the overall regional picture does tell us something, even if it brushes over nuances.

As can be seen in the graph, the midlands and London – likely to be key election battle grounds – are somewhat more mixed. Unemployment is 10.0 per cent in London (the second highest regional level in the UK), 9.3 per cent in the West Midlands (on the higher side) and 8.2 per cent in the East Midlands (broadly in line with the national figures).

Looking not just at unemployment levels, but how they have changed since December 2010 reveals some interesting trends. Over the UK as a whole, the unemployment rate rose by 0.5 per cent over 2011, but in the North West it increased by 1.6 per cent and in the North East by 1.1 per cent – respectively three times and twice as fast as the national rate. Meanwhile in the South East it rose by just 0.1 per cent, it did not increase at all in the South East and in the West Midlands it actually fell by 0.4 per cent.

Broadly stated, areas that voted Conservative have both lower unemployment and have seen less of a rise in unemployment over 2011. Any Labour strategy aimed at channeling popular anger over poor economic performance needs to take this into account.

Zooming into even more local figures reinforces this picture. The broader measure of unemployment (the internationally comparable ILO numbers) are only available on a regional basis, but figures for the claimant count – a narrower measure counting only those in receipt of Job Seekers' Allowance – are available on a constituency by constituency basis.

The national rate of claimant count unemployment is currently 5.0 per cent. In Labour held seats, the rate is an average 5.2 per cent, whilst in Conservative held seats it is considerably lower at 2.9 per cent. In the 50 most marginal Conservative held seats (using the 2010 boundaries and results) it is 3.6 per cent, well below the national average and that of Labour held seats. By contrast the claimant count in the 30 most marginal Labour seats is 4.7 per cent, a touch below the national average.

In other words, on the most recent data, Conservative held seats have considerably lower unemployment than Labour held ones and even the 50 most marginal Conservative held seats are doing a lot better than the national figures suggest. Perhaps most worrying, from an electoral strategy point of view, the thirty most marginal Labour seats – the ones the Conservatives need to take to win an overall majority in 2015 – are also doing better (in unemployment terms) than the grim national data suggests.

The economy in 2015

Whilst predicting what the jobs market, or the wider economy, will look like in 2015 is almost impossible to do with any degree of certainty, some educated guesses can be made.

Whilst the UK's overall level of unemployment is comparable to that of the struggling USA, the picture in the south is actually far closer to that of booming Germany. Meanwhile in the north, the best comparators are crisis-hit Bulgaria or Hungary.

What happens to employment over the next three years will depend to a large degree on the direction of the rest of the economy. In terms of public sector employment though, there is greater certainty. The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) has estimated that 710,000 public sector jobs will be lost between 2011 and 2017 as a result of the government's planned spending cuts. Whilst the OBR does not provide regional economic forecasts, it seems fair to calculate these job cuts pro rata by where public sector workers are currently located. For example, 11.4 per cent of all public sector workers are currently located in the North West, and so assuming that the job losses were proportional then the North West is set to lose 81,075 public sector jobs. These expected job losses (as forecast by the OBR and regionalised pro rata) can then be compared to current regional employment levels. Simple maths tell us the greater the share of public sector workers in the overall workforce the greater the expected hit to employment in each region from the government's spending cuts. Chart 2 summarises these results for the English regions (the picture is somewhat more complex in the devolved nations where local legislatures might be able to affect the results by adopting different policies).

As can be clearly seen, the worst hit regions from the direct impact of the government's austerity policies will be the North East, Yorkshire & the Humber and the North West. The least affected will be the East of England, the South East and the East Midlands. The coming public sector job losses then can be expected to simply add to existing regional inequalities and trends.

Turning to private sector job creation, the picture is a lot less clear. Whilst the OBR has forecast reasonably strong private sector job growth, this forecast is more dependent on other factors (consumer spending, investment, etc) and so more subject to uncertainty. Again the OBR provides no regional breakdowns of its forecasts but it seems fair to assume that, in the absence of a very active regional policy, then private sector job creation will mainly come in areas where there is already strong private sector employment.

History shows that it is perfectly possible for Conservative governments to oversee sluggish growth, rising unemployment and public spending cuts whilst winning re-election. The crucial factor is that enough people are doing comparatively better to sustain an election winning coalition.

An analysis carried out by PricewaterhouseCoopers after the Comprehensive Spending Review in October 2010 tried to calculate the total number of job losses due to spending cuts in both the public sector and the related impact on private sector suppliers to government. The pattern it found is the familiar one: the worst hit regions are in the north, Wales and Scotland whilst the least affected were the south and east of England.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development, in its most recent Labour Market Update, reported similar findings with a growing north/south divide in private sector employers' hiring intentions.

Stepping back from those out of work to look at those in work, a similar regional disparity can be found. Recent work by the Resolution Foundation has shown the regional distribution of households by income (the data is from 2009/10 but the pattern is unlikely to have changed a great deal). Chart 3 shows low to middle income families by region as a percentage of the total population. Constituency level data on wages reveals a similar picture. Mean gross annual fulltime earnings for the UK as a whole are £26,148. In Labour held seats this falls to £24,192, 7.5 per cent below the national average, whilst in Conservative held seats it rises to £27,977, 7.0 per cent above the national average. The average worker in a Tory held seat is some 15.6 per cent better off than the average worker in a Labour held seat.

Which economy?

McClymont and Jackson are certainly right to worry about 'Cameron's Trap'; history shows that it is perfectly possible for Conservative governments to oversee sluggish growth, rising unemployment and public spending cuts whilst winning re-election. The crucial factor is that enough people are doing comparatively better to sustain an election winning coalition.

Whilst the national data on employment and unemployment suggests that the jobs market is performing abysmally, there are important regional caveats to this. Whilst headline unemployment remains very high, it is certainly much higher in Labour held than Conservative held seats and regions. The most marginal Conservative held seats are also crucially doing better than the national average. Whilst it will be the jobs market of 2015 which is a decisive factor in the next election, the trends for both public and private sector employment suggest that this picture of large regional variations will continue. A similar pattern can be found when one looks at the incomes of those in work – in general, people in currently Conservative held seats are doing better than those in Labour areas.

It's often noted that the next election will be decided by the economy. The crucial question for electoral strategists is which economy – the local or the national? ■

CHART 2: Public Sector Job Losses as a % of Total Employment (to 2017)



CHART 3: Households on Low to Modest Incomes



The core vote, swing vote fallacy

There are core voters in every social group, just as there are swing voters in every social group. **Hopi Sen** investigates where the real swing voters have gone



Hopi Sen is a Labour blogger and co-author of In the Black Labour. A longer version of this article with full details of the polling used is available at www.fabians.org.uk

On one level, the answer to why Labour lost so catastrophically in 2010 is simple: We had presided over an enormous economic collapse, had an unpopular leader, had little in the way of an exciting policy agenda, and had, as a result of the accumulated errors, mistakes and malfunctions of government, lost our significant leads on many issues important to voters.

But this is only part of the story. After all, it's hard to argue that the Labour government of 2005-2010 was more incompetent, more riven by division, more scandal-ridden than the Conservatives from 1987-1992. Yet they won with their highest ever vote total, and we lost with one of our lowest.

So did something deeper than the obvious cause our electoral defeat? The key point most centre-left analysis of the decline of the New Labour coalition proceeds from is the fact that between 1997 and 2010 Labour's vote total declined by just under five million, while the Conservatives gained only a million extra voters.

Building on this, the argument has been made that the underlying cause of Labour's defeat was a particularly heavy departure of voters from social class DE between 1997 and 2010.

This case was perhaps most clearly expressed during the Labour Leadership campaign, when Ed Miliband's campaign team produced a report that showed that Labour had lost almost a third of its support among members of social class DE, with a vote share falling from 59 per cent in 1997 to 40 per cent in 2010.

The future Labour leader argued that "Five million votes were lost by Labour between 1997 and 2010, but four out of the five million didn't go to the Conservatives. One third went to the Liberal Democrats, and most of the rest simply stopped

voting". This is factually correct and translates to just over one and a half million lost DE voters in current terms.

Because of this scale, the argument that Labour's defeat is best viewed in the light of a decline in DE support, and thus as a failure to meet the needs of our 'core' voters has become something of a recurring theme among centre-left writers.

Ultimately, what all these analyses boil down to is Ed Miliband's argument that "our core vote became our swing vote" and "our working class base cannot be dismissed as a core vote". My question is rather, was it ever a core vote? Clearly, you don't lose a third of your support among a social class without there being something wrong. The question is what?

About a core

Let's clarify a few things. First, we need to decide what a 'core vote' is.

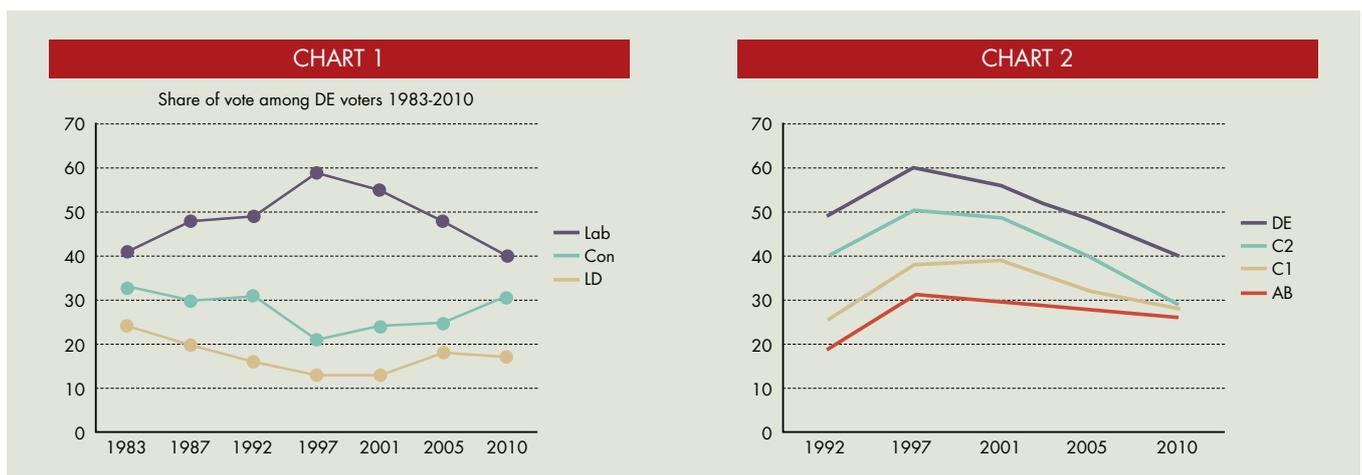
On one reading, any DE voter 'should' be a core Labour voter, because their interests are so clearly identified with Labour. It is tempting therefore to define DE voters as 'core Labour voters' – but the corollary is that any AB voter 'should' be a Tory core voter, which is, clearly, nonsense.

Obviously, voters of every social class vary in their electoral preferences. In choosing to define Labour's 'core' we have to understand that your core should perhaps not be defined by your best ever performance. Those who say Labour needs to win back 'five million lost voters' and highlight the 'DE decline', measure Labour's electoral performance in 2010 against the rather unusual baseline of 1997. But 1997 was a landslide Labour election victory, and 2010 an epic defeat. To subtract vote totals or vote share from one to the other and attribute the difference to an inattention to the needs of 'core' voters is overly simplistic.

Simply put, Labour's 1997 support among DE voters was far from being a 'core vote'.

Chart 1 shows Labour's vote share among DE voters in every election since 1983, as measured by Ipsos-MORI.

What does this tell us? Well, first of all it tells us that when the Labour party is nationally unpopular, we do much worse among DE voters than when we are popular. It also suggests



that 1997 was an unusual election, as support for Labour was massively increased from both 1987 and 1992 among DE voters.

If the chart were cut-off at 1997, one might argue that the more 'New Labour' the manifesto, the greater the DE social class responds by voting Labour.

By 2005, Labour support among DE voters had declined all the way back – to the levels of support won by Neil Kinnock in 1987 and 1992. If Labour lost DE support after 1997, it did so to the same extent Labour under Kinnock and Blair gained support from 1983. So, in what sense can this group, which varies so greatly in voting choices over time, be deemed 'core' voters? They cannot, because they are not. They are swing voters, who are in the DE social group.

However, even if it is the case that to take the 1997 'peak' of DE support for Labour as a baseline for working class 'core' support is incorrect, that doesn't mean Labour might not have a significant problem.

First, it is true that support for Labour has declined more sharply among DE voters than any other social class. Chart 2 is from the Smith Institute pamphlet *Winning Back the Five Million*.

From this we can see that Labour support increased substantially from 1992-1997 across all social groups, and declined among all social groups after 2001, with the sharpest decline coming among C2 and DE voters.

Yet looking at the data this way can be misleading. We also need to look at how the Labour's share of vote in one social class compares to our share of vote overall.

Chart 3 is an attempt to set this out, comparing the MORI data for each social class to the overall result MORI identified for that election. Effectively, this seeks to measure how likely a voter in a particular social class is to vote Labour, compared to the 'average' Labour voter. If MORI reports Labour scored 40 per cent among DE voters, but 30 per cent overall in the 2010 general election, this would appear here as a score of 133 per cent.

This shows a much more stable picture for Labour's support among social group DE, with support consistently at 130 to 140 per cent of Labour's total polling performance from 1992 onwards. What becomes really striking when we look at relative, not absolute electoral performance, is Labour's sharp relative decline among C2 votes from 2001 to 2010.

This shift in support is a further reminder that a politics of 'core' and 'swing' does not easily translate into social groups. There are core voters in every social group, but there are also swing voters in every social group. So where have these swing voters gone?

What about the Tories?

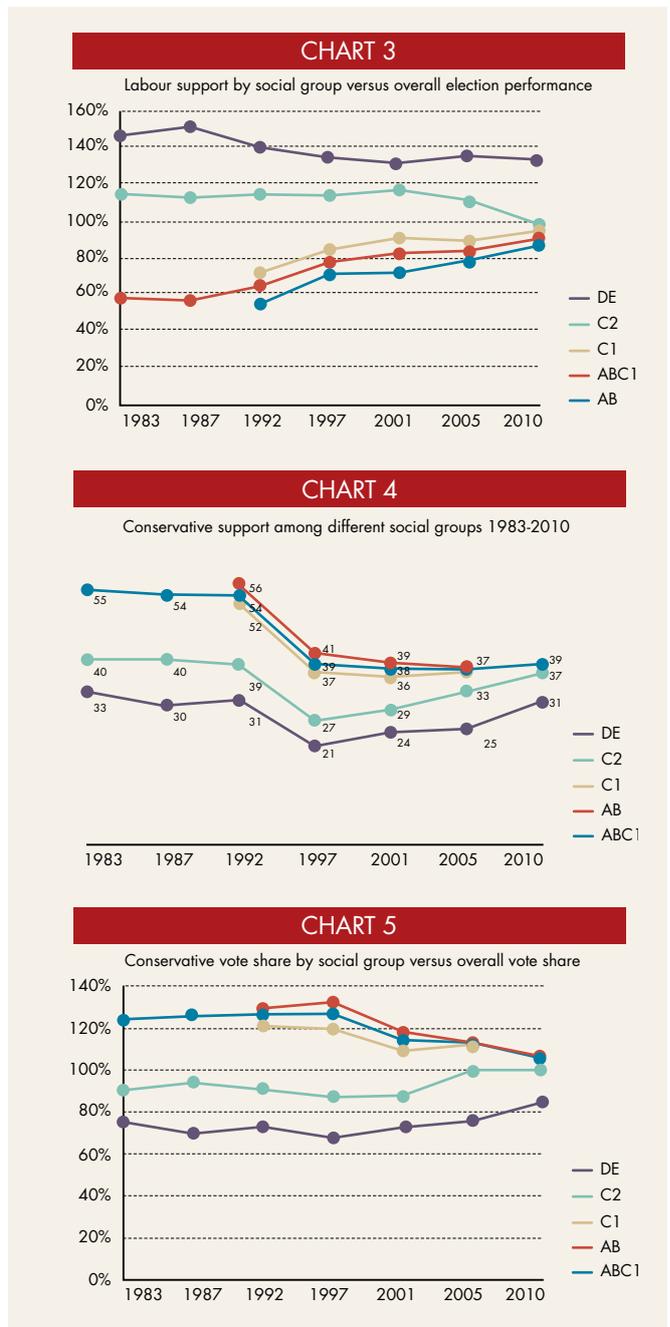
Chart 4 shows Conservative support broken out by social class over the last seven elections.

Two things stand out. First, the 1997 election was absolutely seismic for the Conservative party and they have not recovered support in their 83-92 key segments.

The second is that their post 1997 recovery looks as if it has been driven primarily by a recovery among C2 and DE voters, not by AB or C1 voters. Among C2 and DE voters, the 2010 Conservatives were at roughly the support level they enjoyed from 1983 to 1992. In other words, among C2 and DE voters, there was a recovery of Conservative fortunes.

However, this chart doesn't take account of the Conservatives relative performance, so let's look at how the Tories did in each social group compared to how they performed in the UK as a whole.

Chart 5 confirms that, compared to the 80s and 90s, the Conservatives in 2010 did historically well among C2



and DE voters in relative terms. On the other hand, the Conservatives did not see a significant increase in either the AB or C1 groups vote between 2005 and 2010, so their relative performance declined.

One explanation for this trend might be that the UK electorate is increasingly homogenising in terms of vote choice and class, with voters from different social classes making increasingly similar choices. However, to the extent that we are considering Labour's prospects with those classified today as being in 'working class' social groups, this should remind us that Labour's decline there has been accompanied by a Conservative recovery among C2/DE voters.

This again suggests we cannot simply assume that the way to win C2 and DE voters over is to follow a 'core vote' strategy. The C2 and DE voters have chosen to support the Conservatives in significant numbers.

Of course, this does not mean that C2 and DE voters do not have different interests to AB and C1 voters. They are, overall, far more likely to be Labour supporters. But within each social group, from A to E, there are core Labour voters, swing voters and strong Conservative voters.

What about turnout?

One possible counter-argument is that the real differential decline in turn-out between social groups provides a source of potential 'core' voters who could be attracted with a 'traditional' left message.

One answer might be to point out that in a first past the post system, this might not matter very much if such voters are geographically located together in safe Labour seats, but both as democrats and as believers in equity we should reject such an analysis.

While turnout has declined among all social groups, it has declined most strongly among DE voters. However, we should be wary of assuming that the reason turnout has declined is because Labour's traditional supporters alone have deserted it.

Considering that the peak of C2 and DE support in both votes and share of vote was the ultra-centrist manifesto of 1997, significantly above the support level received in 1983, 1987, 1992, this does not lead to the immediate conclusion that there exists a pool of dissatisfied left-of-centre voters in the C2DE class, to whom it would be possible to appeal without any political price elsewhere.

However, in order to see if there is such a group, we can look to see if there is evidence that there is a significant class differential in issues, leadership or party performance ratings, which might identify potential areas which might motivate such potential voters back to the polls.

(Also we should bear in mind that ABC1C2DE social groupings, being based on profession, are also subject to changes in population size. There has been a significant decline of the numbers in the DE social class in recent years. Whether this might in and of itself have caused an apparent decline in turnout – i.e. if there was a differential turnout between 'old' DE voters and 'current' DE voters – is something which should be explored.)

The class effect – how did C2DE voters views change?

We can examine the polling data on key issues to see if there are significant differences between social groups on key issues or in how they view political parties. We can first look at the polling data on the most 'important issues' for each social group, to see which issues are most salient, and if there is a difference in issue importance by social class.

In a YouGov poll conducted in the run up to the 2010 general election, we can see that C2DE voters regarded the economy as the overwhelming issue (52 per cent), though to a slightly lesser extent than ABC1 voters (62 per cent), with crime (29 per cent v 23 per cent) and immigration (45 per cent v 42 per cent) receiving a little more focus.

Similarly, in March 2010 MORI carried out their regular polling on the most important issues facing Britain, and as ever with their issues index, broke the data out by social group. This found some surprising conclusions. First, concern about education and the NHS was much more important to AB voters than C2 or DE voters. Correspondingly, DE voters were significantly more concerned about crime, inflation and unemployment. Finally, all social groups were concerned by immigration, but it was of particular concern to C1 and C2 voters.

If these are the issues that were important to voters, what did they think of Labour's achievement and offers, and does this vary by social group?

In late April 2010 YouGov asked voters how they thought Britain had done under the Labour government in recent years. What is startling about the answer is how small a variation we see between social groups. In almost every case, C2DE voters gave the same assessment of political progress as ABC1

voters. The only noticeable difference was that C2DE voters thought more had been done for pensioners (29 v 23 per cent). Looking at Labour's future offer by social group, we again find little difference in expectations for a Labour government.

Main/Other Important Issue	AB	C1	C2	DE
Crime	18	34	22	26
Economy	67	59	50	42
Education/Schools	32	20	10	10
Inflation	5	6	12	11
NHS	29	19	19	12
Immigration	28	35	39	30
Unemployment	16	19	28	24

So C2DE voters generally thought the same issues were important as ABC1 voters, and were just as critical as ABC1 voters about Labour performance and as pessimistic about our likelihood of making progress in future. But of course, pessimism can be general, as well as party specific. Just because voters didn't think Labour and Gordon Brown would reduce asylum claims doesn't mean they thought the Conservatives and David Cameron would do any better.

But comparing YouGov polls taken in the run up to the 2005 election with polls taken in the run up to the 2010 election we see small, but noticeable declines in C2DE approval ratings for the government (from 30 to 26 per cent), a decline in those thinking the Labour leader would make the best prime minister (from 37 to 30 per cent), and a major increase in the number of C2DE voters who think the Tory leader would make a good prime minister (from 17 to 30 per cent).

On the issues, the most noticeable shifts are from a strong Labour lead on education and unemployment to an effective tie, and an equally big shift on the economy away from Labour.

Conclusion

This analysis suggest that in 2010 Labour were reduced to something close to our 'core' support in both social class C2 and DE, achieving in absolute terms a 1983-style result. Significantly, Labour's relative collapse among C2 voters since 2005 was far greater than among DE voters, suggesting that Labour had little to offer this group. This was driven by a decline in the perception C2DE voters had of Labour's performance, leadership and future policy offer.

Conversely, the Conservatives achieved a strong result among C2 and DE voters, suggesting that they had succeeded in convincing many swing C2 and DE voters that they would be more effective on the economy than Labour, stronger on crime and immigration, and offer better leadership, while Labour held only a small lead on protecting services. This impact is particularly strong among C2 voters, which perhaps explains the Conservatives strong performance among this group.

From this, we can conclude that if Labour wants to win back C2 and DE voters, it should not pursue a 'core' strategy, as the Conservative improvements on votes, issues and leader ratings among C2 and DE mean these voters are not only disillusioned left voters who have abandoned Labour for the sofa, but have instead include many who have embraced David Cameron's Conservatives, or are sceptical about all political parties.

To win them back, we need to convince them that we have the right leadership team, are trusted to deliver on the economy, will produce better public services, and, if possible, to be more effective in reducing crime than the current government. ■

Allow organisers to organise

The right people with the right skills can win elections. Labour needs to give them the time and resources to do it, writes **Caroline Badley**



Caroline Badley is campaign manager in Birmingham Edgbaston and is leading the Birmingham Training Academy, Summer 2012

Election night in 2010 was full of surprises. The defeat itself was not one of them; the steady loss of Labour support since the fateful 'election that never was' in 2007 became a torrent by 2009 from which it was hard to imagine a recovery.

Surprises though there were. Oxford East, Birmingham Edgbaston, Westminster North were the more pleasant ones; Cannock Chase and Redcar loom high in my mind as those at the other end of the spectrum. Regional offices had pushed the rising tide back ... but not that far.

On the doorstep we knew that the electorate thought we were out of touch. Swathes of voters were just angry. Angry and in many places, skint. Unemployment was up and inflation had risen sharply again at the beginning of the year. Oh and we were presiding over a system where it was ok for MPs to decorate their homes at tax payers' expense.

The rage was particularly strong from traditional Labour voters. Whilst a number of voters who left Labour in 2005 over Iraq were coming back, we were taking a kicking from the 'DE' social group, and demographic analysis after the election proved it. As discussed elsewhere in this magazine, in 1997 we had 59 per cent of this group. In 2010 we held just 40 per cent and fewer of them actually voted. Winning back support in this group is vital to our chances of success in 2015. Their propensity to vote may not be as high as the more affluent, but there are a lot more of them.

The only way we are going to do that is to get out there and talk with

them. But not just talk to the DEs; talk to all groups of voter. As a political movement we have to understand better that not everyone has the same experiences, the same aspirations or the same values. People are different and people are voters. Whilst some of their opinions might differ from the majority of Labour party members, their views can have political validity and, in a democracy, their concerns need to be listened to even if we chose not to address them. The danger is when we forego the conversation and so misunderstand the problem, as we did with immigration in the early part of the 2005 to 2010 term.

European enlargement may seem like a great idea to the MD looking to expand his company's export market into Eastern Europe but it can look pretty terrifying to the sole trader in a big city suburb trying to pay his mortgage and help a child through university.

Of course, this re-engagement can only work if it's done at the highest levels. As a movement we should do it because we want to represent the people and communities in which we live, but the policy decisions are taken by our leaders. So it's them and their advisers who need regular facetime (or phontime) with voters. Only then will we be able to reconnect at the level we need to.

The good news is, of course, that talking to voters is also a great organisational tool for winning elections. Research suggests that differential turnout happens when voters are contacted on polling day or just before to remind them to vote. So on a national

level we need to prioritise building an organisational structure which recruits and trains volunteers to get out there and talk to people; that knows what to do with the information gained; and then deploys it meaningfully on polling day.

People are key. The right people, with the right information, with the right resources can win elections in the field.

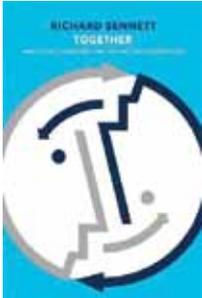
European enlargement may seem like a great idea to the MD looking to expand his company's export market into Eastern Europe but it can look pretty terrifying to the sole trader in a big city suburb trying to pay his mortgage and help a child through university.

And to do that we need to allow our organisers to actually organise. All too often, Labour party organisers are drafted in to help with key campaigner visits, audience-building or to deal with legal wrangles. They barely have time to design a comprehensive activist recruitment and training programme, let alone implement it. In any case, these types of activity need continuity over time. Organisers dragged off to a byelection at a moment's notice can hardly provide that either.

But without this change then the party cannot change. Labour party members and supporters are volunteers. Willing volunteers in the main, but the numbers of them who have the evidence-based knowledge and the skills to help them run a tight campaign in a marginal constituency are few and far between. A national call centre or mailing house cannot reconnect with our lost voters and win the next election. But trained volunteers can. ■

The liminal left

Richard Sennett's *Together* is disconnected: it takes in everything but ends up saying nothing in particular. Just like the intellectual left argues **Jonathan Rutherford**



"Together: The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Co-operation"
Richard Sennett

Allen Lane, £25



Jonathan Rutherford
is editor of
Soundings journal

Richard Sennett's new book is a study of the practice of co-operation. It is the second of three in what he calls his 'homo faber' project – the idea of human beings as the makers of their own destiny through work. The first book was *The Craftsman* in 2008. The third will be on making cities. Sennett is a sociologist whose prose has illuminated core experiences of life in modern capitalist societies. Like his other books, *Together* has the quality of popular scholarship, a difficult balance of theoretical exposition and storytelling. But unlike his other books he has made its structure more fragmentary, in an attempt to encourage a co-operative practice of dialogue between reader and author. In this respect the book attempts to communicate more than an analysis and description: it wants to practise a politics.

It is published at a time when as a society, we are no longer sure what it means to be together. As the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur noted, "this wishing to live together is silent, generally unnoticed, buried; one does not remark its existence until it falls apart." After three decades of globalisation and uncontrolled capitalism, the anxiety of falling apart has erupted into the body politic in a variety of symptoms of economic insecurity and resentments toward immigration and welfare recipients. Neither tangible nor measurable, this falling apart is a structure

of feeling that has been named variously as a 'social recession', and, with a more moralistic intent, 'broken Britain'. A variety of antidotes have been prescribed, such as more co-operatives and mutuals, social indicators to measure happiness, and the still vague notions of responsible capitalism and the Big Society. But up to now the emergent politics of social life remains fizzing around the margins in movements like UK Uncut and Occupy.

Sennett has written on the practice of co-operation for the "intelligent general reader who quite properly asks: why does it matter?" In spite of the times we're living in, the question threw me into a quandary, because the book didn't convince me that it did matter. It's not that I don't believe in co-operation, only that the book didn't feel that relevant to the predicament we're in. Its intent to be dialogic and to practise a politics of co-operation had the effect of revealing a weakness that is symptomatic of left intellectual culture more generally.

If society is about connection and belonging, *Together* is disconnected. It doesn't really belong anywhere. Sennett draws on an eclectic range of illustrations: Booker T Washington's Tuskegee Institute for former slaves, Robert Owen's Rochdale Principles, the 1900 Paris Universal Exposition, Holbein's painting *The Ambassadors* in the National Gallery, Michael de Montaigne's pet cat. Thinkers, historical figures, cultural references and ideas from across Europe and the United States are marshalled to describe and explain the practice of co-operation in all its various forms, from industrial to religious to psycho-analytical. *Together* takes in everything but it ends up saying nothing in particular. Its scope is wide but it is never located in one place in one moment of time for long enough to give us a meaningful understanding of the experience of being together. After one hundred pages I found myself, metaphorically speaking, somewhere in the mid-Atlantic, an unbound and featureless nowhere between places.

Together is symptomatic of a problem with left intellectual culture that our present crisis and Labour's disoriented foundering has brought to the fore: it jettisoned its moorings in national culture sometime back in the 1970s. From structuralism to Marxist theory, what mattered was undoing meaning, not securing it for a common purpose. It created a deracinated culture that forgot that people mostly live their lives in the parochial, and in the vernacular. It either ignored or was condescending toward the ordinary and the everyday. It favoured difference over sameness and abstract ends over democratic muddling through. The legacy

of this disconnection is now evident in the intellectually impoverished struggle of social democracy across Europe to understand why millions of former voters feel abandoned by it and why so many have shifted toward the xenophobic right or nationalistic left.

The intellectual left has always prided itself on its openness to the world and its willingness to learn from other identities, cultures and nations. But its fascination with the radicalism of alterity downplayed the value of creating, rather than simply deconstructing, places and identities held in common. It still regards with suspicion people who express a passionate identification with the places they call home. And it is slow to recognise their fear, humiliation and vulnerability when the ties that bind them to these places are coming loose.

The intellectual left still regards with suspicion people who express a passionate identification with the places they call home. And it is slow to recognize their fear, humiliation and vulnerability when the ties that bind them to these places are coming loose.

In the UK, Labour remains entangled in the legacy of the New Labour government, whose disconnected politics embraced globalisation and complied with the demands of financial capitalism. It tore up its roots and tried to deny its own history. There is no being together in an eternal present. To be together requires history to give meaning and context to our differences and relationships; it requires a location in which to encounter each other; and it requires the practice of reciprocity which is the ethical glue of our interdependency. These are the preconditions for being together and creating some form of common democratic polity.

We are living through the worst recession since the 1870s, a stalling of living standards unknown in the last century, and unprecedented levels of private debt. Are we all in this together? Directing the question at the bankers and their like, the answer is no. Applying the question to Sennett's book and the broader intellectual politics it represents, the answer is ambiguous. The intellectual left has still to understand what exactly people are in before we can recognise that we are often not in there with them. ■

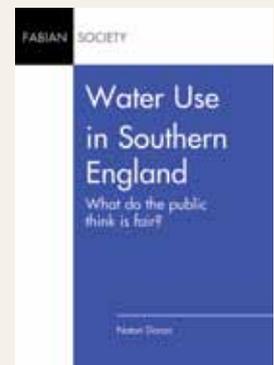
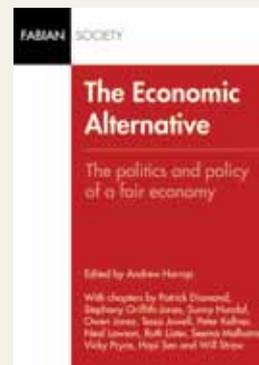
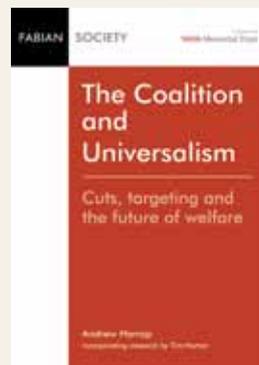
THE SPRING IN REVIEW

The Fabian Society's annual New Year Conference, 'The Economic Alternative' was a resounding success, attracting over 1,000 delegates to discuss the left's plans for the economy. Much of the media coverage of the event centred on Ed Balls' announcement that the next Labour government would have to retain the coalition's spending plans, including a public sector wage freeze. Beyond this headline statement the Conference produced a number of timely contributions on the shape of Labour's economic alternative. Highlights included Neal Lawson, Caroline Lucas, Deborah Mattinson, Chuka Umunna, Kitty Ussher and Anthony Painter discussing responses to the financial crisis; Michael Jacobs, Vicky Pryce, John Smith, Will Straw and Rowenna Davis thrashing out Britain's strengths for future growth; and an Economic Dragons' Den with Sadiq Khan in the chair marshalling dragons David Lammy, Sally Bercow and Mary Riddell. Will Straw won the support of the audience for his pitch for a British state investment bank.

Other recent highlights included the 'Social Europe: Worth Fighting For?' conference, in which Emma Reynolds, the shadow Europe minister, made her first public speech, calling for a

new European social ethos. This was followed by lively discussion on how the left continues to make the argument for the European social model. A new branch of the Fabians was founded north of the border as the Scottish Fabians were launched at Labour's Scottish Conference in Dundee. The Fabian fringe event on how Labour wins again in Scotland and makes the case for progressive unionism was well-attended and valuable in its contribution to the reforming of Scottish Labour. The Fabian Society also hosted a discussion on poverty – 'Rich Democracies, Poor People' – in the House of Commons, challenging the current coalition policy on welfare and highlighting the need for a more contributory model of social security.

It's been a busy and productive period for the Fabian Environment and Citizenship, Next Economy and Next State programmes of work. December saw the release of *Water Use in Southern England*, a report by Fabian researcher Natan Doron which called for increased use of water metering. *The Coalition and Universalism*, the final publication from the Webb Memorial Trust project on poverty and inequality, made the case for universal provision of welfare as the most effective form of poverty reduction. In *The Economic Alternative* speakers at the New Year Conference, including Peter Kellner, Will Straw and Tessa Jowell, contributed to a collection of essays on Britain's next economy. All these reports are available at www.fabians.org.uk



NOTICEBOARD

Subscription rates

At the Annual General Meeting, members agreed to increase the annual Ordinary rate subscription by £1 to £38.00 (£36.00 for those paying by direct debit).

The Reduced rate subscription for students, retired and unwaged/unemployed members remains unchanged at £19.00 (£18.00 direct debit).

Fabian Fortune Fund

WINNERS: S. F Rudolph £100
J. R. Smith £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



A note from Local Societies Officer Deborah Stoaite

The Fabian Society in Scotland has been relaunched, with a highly successful meeting at the recent Scottish Labour Party Conference. It's been a bleak time in Scotland for the Labour left which we are now moving on from. As Noel Foy, our Scottish Convenor puts it: "The Scottish Party has clearly recovered from its defeat last May and knows it must come up with new ideas if the Nationalists are to be seen off. Already there is more clarity and focus".

The Scottish Fabians have an active and enthusiastic steering group who will play a big part in this resurgence. There will be a conference – 'Scotland; What's Left? Renewing the Centre Left Vision for Scotland' on May 12 in Edinburgh. This will be doing what the Fabians do best – generating further discussion, events and publications leading to a cogent policy agenda which can be presented to the electorate. Or, again to quote Noel Foy, this is "all good for morale and a boost to the forces of goodness and light standing up for the Union!".

Scotland: What's Left? Renewing the Centre-Left Vision for Scotland



**Keynote speech from Johann Lamont
leader of the Scottish Labour Party**

**1pm, 12 May 2012,
Our Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh**

**Visit www.fabians.org.uk/scottish-fabians
for more information and tickets**

LISTINGS SPRING 2012

BEXLEY

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

BIRMINGHAM

All meetings at 7.00 in the Birmingham and Midland Institute, Margaret Street, Birmingham. Details from Claire Spencer on virginiaisawithc@gmail.com

BOURNEMOUTH & DISTRICT

• 30 March. Rt Hon Stephen Twigg MP.
• 27 April. Lisa Nandy MP 'Restoring Credibility on the Economy. How can the Left be both Credible and Fair?'
All meetings at The Friends Meeting House, Wharnclyffe Rd, Boscombe, Bournemouth at 7.30. Contact Ian Taylor on 01202 396634 for details or taylorbournemouth@gmail.com

BRIGHTON & HOVE

• 27 April. 69th Annual General Meeting 7.30. 8.00 Andy Harrop, General Secretary of the Fabian Society. Community Base, 5th Floor, South Wing, 115 Queens Rd, Brighton. Details of these and all meetings from Maire McQueeney on 01273 607910 email mairemcqueeney@waitrose.com

BRISTOL

Society reforming. Contact Ges Rosenberg for details on rosenberg@churchside.me.uk

CAMBRIDGE

Details from Kenny Latunde-Dada cambridgefabiansociety@hotmail.co.uk. Join the Cambridge Fabians Facebook group at <http://www.facebook.com/groups/cambridgefabiansociety>

CAMDEN

Contact Tristan Stubbs for details at tristanstubbs@hotmail.com

CARDIFF AND THE VALE

Details of all meetings from Jonathan Wynne Evans on 02920 594 065 or wynneevans@phonecoop.coop

CENTRAL LONDON

16 May. Michael Parker on 'The Future of the NHS'. Regular meetings at 7.30 in the Cole Room, 11 Dartmouth Street, London SW1A 9BN. Details from Giles Wright on 0207 227 4904

CHISWICK & WEST LONDON

All meetings at 8.00 in Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall. Details from Monty Bogard on 0208 994 1780, email mb014f362@blueyonder.co.uk

COLCHESTER

Details from John Wood on 01206 212100 or woodj@madasafish.com
Or 01206 212100

CUMBRIA & NORTH LANCASHIRE

Inaugural meeting. • 30 March. John Woodcock MP. 7.15 at Castle Green Hotel, Kendal. For information, please contact Dr Robert Judson at dr.robertjudson@btinternet.com

DARTFORD & GRAVESHAM

Regular meetings at 8.00 in Dartford Working Mens Club. Details from Deborah Stoaite on 0207 227 4904 email debstoaite@hotmail.com

DERBY

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

DONCASTER AND DISTRICT

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

EAST LOTHIAN

Details of this and all other meetings from Noel Foy on 01620 824386 email noelfoy@lewisk3.plus.com

FINCHLEY

Enquiries to Mike Walsh on 07980 602122

GLASGOW

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

GLOUCESTER

Regular meetings at TGWU, 1 Pullman Court, Great Western Rd, Gloucester. Details from Roy Ansley on 01452 713094 email roybrendachd@yahoo.co.uk

GREENWICH

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

GRIMSBY

Regular meetings. Details from Maureen Freeman on m.freeman871@btinternet.com

HARROW

Details from Marilyn Devine on 0208 424 9034. Fabians from other areas where there are no local Fabian Societies are very welcome to join us.

HASTINGS AND RYE

Meetings held on last Friday of each month. Please contact Nigel Sinden at fabian@sindenql.com

HAVERING

• 16 May. Brian Keegan on 'Socialism in an Affluent Society'. 7.30 at Havering Museum, High St, Romford, RM1 1JU
Details of all meetings from David Marshall email david.c.marshall.t21@btinternet.com tel 01708 441189
For latest information, see the website <http://haveringfabians.org.uk>

HORNSEY AND WOOD GREEN

New Society forming. Contact David Chaplin – chaplind@gmail.com

ISLINGTON

For details of all meetings contact Lucy Rigby, lucymrigby@hotmail.com

LEEDS

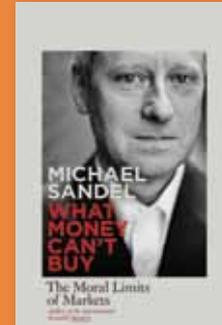
Details of all meetings from John Bracken at leedsfabians@gmail.com

LEICESTER

Please contact Annie Moelwyn-Hughes on anniemh@tiscali.co.uk



FABIAN QUIZ



WHAT MONEY CAN'T BUY Michael Sandel

In recent decades, market values have crowded out nonmarket norms in almost every aspect of life – medicine, education, government, law, art, sports, even family life and personal relations. Without quite realising it, Sandel argues, we have drifted from *having* a market economy to being a market society.

In *What Money Can't Buy*, Sandel examines one of the biggest ethical questions of our time and provokes a debate that's been missing in our market-driven age: What is the proper role of markets in a democratic society, and how can we protect the moral and civic goods that markets do not honour and money cannot buy?

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

How long did Occupy protestors spend camped outside St Paul's Cathedral before finally being evicted on 28th February 2012?

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

Answers must be received no later than Friday 1st June 2012

MANCHESTER

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

MERSEYSIDE

Please contact Phillip Brightmore at p.a.brightmore@gmail.com

MIDDLESBOROUGH

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

MILTON KEYNES

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

NEWHAM

Regular meetings. Contact Tahmina Rahman – Tahmina_rahman_1@hotmail.com

NORTHUMBRIA AREA

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

NORTHAMPTON AREA

If you are interested in becoming a member of this new society, please contact Dave Brede at davidbrede@yahoo.com

NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE

Any Fabian interested in joining a North Staffordshire Society, please contact Richard Gorton on r.gorton748@btinternet.com

NORWICH

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

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Contact Dr Arun Chopra – arunk Chopra@gmail.com
www.nottsfabians.org.uk
twitter @NottsFabians

PETERBOROUGH

• 13 April. AGM and speaker Paul Madison on 'The Situation in Palestine'. Meetings at 8.00 at the Ramada Hotel, Thorpe Meadows, Peterborough. Details from Brian Keegan on 01733 265769, email brian@briankeegan.demon.co.uk

PORTSMOUTH

Regular monthly meetings, details from June Clarkson on 02392 874293 email june.clarkson@ntlworld.com

READING & DISTRICT

For details of all meetings, contact Tony Skuse on 0118 978 5829 email tony@skuse.net

SHEFFIELD

• 17 May. Linda McAvan MEP on 'The Problems confronting the European Community'. Light refreshments from 7.00 The Quaker Meeting House, 10, St James St, Sheffield. Details and information from Rob Murray on 0114 255 8341 or email robertjmurray@hotmail.com

SOUTH EAST LONDON

• 25 April. Murad Batal al-Shishami on 'Mapping the Insurgency in the North Caucasus'. 8.00 at 105 Court Lane, SE21 7EE. Details, contact Duncan Bowie on 020 8693 2709 or email duncanbowie@yahoo.co.uk

SOUTH WEST LONDON

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

SOUTHAMPTON AREA

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

SOUTH TYNESIDE

For information about this Society please contact Paul Freeman on 0191 5367 633 or at freemanpsmb@blueyonder.co.uk

SUFFOLK

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

SURREY

Regular meetings at Guildford Cathedral Education Centre Details from Maureen Swage on 01252 733481 or maureen.swage@btinternet.com

TONBRIDGE AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS

For details of meetings contact John Champneys on 01892 523429

TYNEMOUTH

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

WARWICKSHIRE

• 12 April. Guy Lodge on his book 'Brown at 10'. (Co-authored with Anthony Seldon). All meetings 7.30 at the Friends Meeting House, 28 Regent Place, Rugby Details from Ben Ferrett on ben_ferrett@hotmail.com or <http://warwickshirefabians.blogspot.com/>

WEST DURHAM

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

WIMBLEDON

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

YORK

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

ANNUAL HOUSE OF COMMONS TEA

• Tuesday 10 July, 2.00 – 6.00 Committee Room 10. Tea in Strangers Dining Room 'How Do We Change Politics? – The Constitution, the Media and the People' Tickets £15 from Deborah Stoaate (debstoaate@hotmail.com) 11, Dartmouth St, London SW1H 9BN

the institute of
art and ideas
presents

How The Light Gets In

the philosophy and music festival at hay

31 May - 10 June 2012

globe at hay



philosophy sessions / talks and debates
live sessions / music and comedy
film sessions / documentaries and discussion
night sessions / dancing and chill out

howthelightgetsin.org
globe at hay HR3 5BG
01497 821 762