

LEADING LABOUR

The Fabian essays

**Andy Burnham, Yvette Cooper, Jeremy Corbyn
and Liz Kendall**

FABIAN SOCIETY

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The Fabian Society is Britain's oldest political think tank. Since 1884 the society has played a central role in developing political ideas and public policy on the left. It aims to promote greater equality of power and opportunity; the value of collective public action; a vibrant, tolerant and accountable democracy; citizenship, liberty and human rights; sustainable development; and multilateral international co-operation.

Through a wide range of publications and events the society influences political and public thinking, but also provides a space for broad and open-minded debate, drawing on an unrivalled external network and its own expert research and analysis. Its programme offers a unique breadth, encompassing national conferences and expert seminars; periodicals, books, reports and digital communications; and commissioned and in-house research and comment.

The Society is alone among think tanks in being a democratically-constituted membership organisation, with almost 7,000 members. Over time our membership has included many of the key thinkers on the British left and every Labour prime minister. Today we count over 200 parliamentarians in our number. The voluntary society includes 70 local societies, the Fabian Women's Network and the Young Fabians, which is itself the leading organisation on the left for young people to debate and influence political ideas.

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The question

At crucial moments throughout Labour's history, the Fabian Society has been the place where the party reflects on its past and debates its future. Now, as Labour seeks to come to terms with its shocking rejection at the polls and elect a new leader, we have asked each of the contenders for the leadership to set out their political visions and offers to the party.

The next leader of the Labour party will face a very different political landscape to their predecessors. So many of the old political certainties are no more, and Labour will have to reach out in many different directions to secure a majority government. The long shadow cast by the financial crisis limits the potential for public spending, and faith in the ability of political institutions to tackle complex social problems has collapsed.

This new landscape of course brings with it great challenges, but also huge opportunities to practise politics in new and exciting ways. In these essays, all four candidates were tasked with answering the same main question: how can the Labour party thrive in new times and secure its fundamental mission of creating a more equal society?

1 ANDY BURNHAM

In the months since our devastating election defeat, Labour has been consumed by a round of painful soul-searching.

I spent the early stages of my leadership campaign focusing on the most difficult issues we heard on the doorstep – the deficit, immigration and benefits – because we won't win until we regain the public's trust on them. But this doesn't mean copying the Tories. Far from it. Labour wins when we are better than them.

The focus on our weaknesses has given Labour's leadership campaign a negative feel. The time has come to lift people with a bigger vision.

I will confront a straightforward question: in the 21st century, what is Labour for? My answer is simple: to help everyone get on in life.

In the first few weeks of the contest, the word 'aspiration' dominated the Labour debate. This is because it is widely accepted that our manifesto, while strong on inequality and insecurity, had too little to say to middle income families. But the call for a focus on 'aspiration' is controversial as it is seen as a code for a return to the days when Labour focused on families living in certain parts of the country who shop at more upmarket outlets.

It is undoubtedly true that Tony Blair had a message that resonated with families in the middle. But it is also true that Ed Miliband succeeded in getting through to people with least. In places, at the last election Labour secured some of the most impressive results it has ever had.

The truth is that Labour has developed an unappealing habit in recent years of trying to compartmentalise the public. We have used a 'mosaic' marketing system which segments the public and puts patronising labels on them. We have then tried to develop a 'retail offer' for each of these groups as if politics was just another branch of our consumer society.

This is the thinking that Labour has got to leave behind. We will win when we stop debating which group of voters to focus on and when we speak convincingly and passionately to the aspirations of everyone.

The fact is that the hopes of people at all levels of society are pretty much the same: a secure job; a decent home; a good standard of living; prospects for their kids; and proper care for their parents. But the reality is that, as the 21st century develops, these dreams are dying for millions. Labour's mission must be to revive them and that is what my Labour party will be all about: helping everyone get on.

This is what I've always been about. What brought me into politics in the first place was the sense of injustice I developed on my journey from a Merseyside comprehensive to Cambridge university. It brought home to me just how much harder it is for some to make their way in this world than others.

Young people who can't fall back on well-off parents can't get on in the same way that others can. Access to finance is a major barrier to buying a home or starting a business. The average age of a first-time buyer today

without parental help is 37. You have to be nearly 40 to buy your own home if you aren't helped by your family.

Children from homes in the top income brackets are more than four-and-a-half times more likely to go to a high-ranking university than the average child in the UK. And the options for those not on the university route are still seen as second-class.

One of the greatest failures of post-war public policy has been this country's lack of focus on technical education. Our schools system, and the way it is inspected, is geared towards the academic, university route. Young people who aspire to go on that route have clear goals to aim for and support to get there. But the same cannot be said for young people who aspire to a high-quality technical education. They have been neglected and badly let down by successive parliaments, full of people who went to university and have made that the focus of education policy for the last 50 years.

No wonder so many people feel that politics doesn't speak to them or provide the answers they are looking for. I will change that. I will take Labour out of the 'Westminster bubble' and make it the vehicle for the hopes and dreams of ordinary people once again.

I will set out how we end the discrimination and inequality that is still inherent in our school system and bring true parity between academic and technical education. The best way to raise standards in schools is to give all children in those schools hope that they have something to aim for at the end of it. And the best way to build a modern economy is to invest properly in our skills base. I will set out plans for a revolution in technical education, giving it all the prestige and support that comes with the university route.

This is what I mean by a Labour party which exists to help everyone get on. Aspiration isn't the preserve of certain voters; it is felt by everyone. But, in this modern and insecure world, the light of hope is going out for far too many.

The first budget from a majority Conservative government in 19 years made it even harder for young people to make their way in an already challenging world and raised the prospect of a two-tier workforce dividing young and old. It was a budget that did little for small business, the self-employed, or indeed growth in the overall economy too.

As leader I will work every single day to re-establish Labour as the party of work, both employed and self-employed; the party of business, small, medium and large; and the party of economic credibility.

I will have a Labour vision with fiscal responsibility at its heart and where growth helps reduce our national debt – where government works in constructive partnership with business and unions, not picking fights with one or the other.

The hard truth for Labour is that George Osborne wouldn't have been setting out a Conservative budget at all if we had been trusted to set out the alternative. That loss of trust has now cost us two elections. It will cost us a third if we do not address it.

Our response now and in the years to come must be driven by a burning desire to win back trust. If I am elected leader, winning that trust will be central to my mission.

I began my leadership campaign by acknowledging that in government we should have done more to control spending in the middle of the last decade, so that we were better prepared when the crisis hit. But, let's also be clear, that Labour spending on education and the health service didn't cause the

global banking crisis.

I am proud of our legacy on the NHS with public satisfaction at a record high and waiting times at a record low and proud that we rebuilt thousands of schools and colleges and raised educational standards.

The question facing Britain in the future is how to clear the deficit and run a surplus without making the mistakes of either the last Labour government in overestimating growing tax revenues, or the mistakes of George Osborne's first term in which savage cuts stifled growth and set back deficit reduction.

The recent budget, which disproportionately hit families in work, is no answer to this question. Labour under my leadership will always run sound public finances and we will reduce the national debt, back toward its sustainable pre-global financial crisis levels.

But we will ensure that growth is as important in our plan as being careful on spending. We will ensure that delivering long-term public spending on investment is never sacrificed for short term political convenience – what we spend money on will be as important as how much we spend.

Following that budget, David Cameron began waging his campaign of demonisation against the unions. Just as Labour doesn't win when it seeks conflict with business, I don't see how constantly provoking and picking fights with the unions helps the UK's productivity problem.

I will oppose this unjustified attack on the legitimate role of trade unions to protect people in a fragmented and casualised workplace. But, before the recent election, we got the message wrong on business. It will always be the role of the Labour party to stand up for employees and to criticise those who evade taxes. But that should never lead to an impression that we as a party stand against the millions of businesses, from growing firms and those that create jobs for thousands of people, to small local companies to sole traders and entrepreneurs, that are working hard to survive and thrive, and in doing so employ workers, pay taxes and invest in the future.

While raising skills is crucial to raising pay in the long term, we must also break the cycle of low pay and productivity by boosting pay at the lower end of the pay scales.

The sad truth is that despite his attempt to commandeer the language of the living wage campaign, the chancellor has delivered nothing of the sort, with a measure not based on cost of living, taking no account of the slashing of tax credits, and ignoring the higher living wage rate needed in London.

I welcome plans to raise the minimum wage but, by applying the measure only to those 25 and over, the national minimum wage has now become a five tier system, with your pay decided by the year you were born not the job you do. I want the raise to apply to every age group.

You may have also heard me mention once or twice that I intend to take Labour out of the 'Westminster bubble'. I am standing in this election because I believe our party, and politics in general, needs profound change.

Our Westminster-centric way of life has hollowed out local democracy and left government in England on life support. I plan to change it with an alternative vision for devolution and, through that, a new future for local communities, local democracy and local government. It will build on the vision for health and care I set out in the last parliament, including in a Fabian publication, where councils lead on commissioning with a single budget.

Local government has borne the brunt of the spending cuts so far and many excellent Labour councils have acted to protect vulnerable people and core services but are now reaching the limits of what can be achieved.

There is a real danger that the rhetoric about the Northern Powerhouse will be no more than that and councils will be left shouldering the blame for the painful reality of what happens on the ground.

Devolving power will only truly work when the centre doesn't impose its will on local areas too but instead responds to a genuine demand that comes bottom-up and goes with the local grain. George Osborne's approach, whereby powers are offered on condition that local areas accept his model of elected mayors, is the worst of Westminster's old arrogant ways.

I have three principles on which I base my alternative, better vision for devolution. It must be a solution available to everyone, everywhere. It must not be imposed from the top down with power centralised or over-concentrated in a single individual or institution. And power should be pushed down to the lowest level possible.

I will trust our councils and councillors again and the time has come to trust local communities with more financial freedom too, starting with the ability to build good quality homes. We need the most ambitious house building programme in half a century – the best way to bring down the housing benefit bill is to let councils build homes again and allow Labour to become the party of home ownership.

This period now, the next few years after a bad defeat, will be defining for our party. We will either rise to the challenge with bold solutions to big problems or we will be written off as timid, small and irrelevant.

We cannot wait. The rising cynicism about politics will only make Labour's position worse, not stronger. The change I offer is to take our party out of Westminster and put it back in touch with people across our country.

2 YVETTE COOPER

As we pick ourselves up from defeat, we must ask searching questions about why we lost, and what Labour's future should be. But we should not lose our sense of purpose and our values. They are as important now as ever, and a successful modern Labour party matters more now than ever. Forged out of the industrial revolution, and the trade union and Fabian traditions, Labour has always championed equality, progress, education, opportunity, solidarity and community.

Over a century on, Britain is charting a course through the global digital revolution, as the economy, technology, the workplace, communities and identities all change extremely fast. Inequality has widened, communities are fragmenting, and unlike in the industrial revolution we are getting left behind rather than leading the world.

The Tories don't have the answers – or the values that will help address the challenges Britain faces. But Labour didn't convince people we had the answers either. To do that we need to be true to our values, but change our party so that we can change the country – that's what I am arguing for in the leadership campaign.

It's true the challenges we face are significant. Technology is changing at an exponential pace, but Britain risks being left behind both economically and in reforming the state. We are experiencing changing historical identities, with changing pressures on family life – such as caring for older relatives as well as young children – and young people concerned about finding a home and a nourishing career. Our country is seeing shifting political identities, with the rise of nationalism, the new questioning of what we share in common, and a creaking political structure that struggles to cope. And the aftermath of the financial crisis continues to pose a challenge to all parties of the left – public confidence in the state and what it can deliver when debt remains high. Labour's problem at the election was failing to answer these big questions.

We weren't able to reassure people concerned about the future and lost votes to UKIP and the Tories. And we didn't have answers to changing identities and those who wanted a more optimistic vision of the future, losing votes to the SNP, the Greens and again the Tories. The answer for Labour now isn't going to be incremental change with a sticking plaster on tricky policies here or there. Labour has to be bigger, bolder and better if we're to win.

We have to convince people that there is something better they can be a part of. At the election the messages of fear, of division and of blame were louder – they won, we lost. But let's not mistake that for the Tories having the right answers. They are failing to tackle the productivity problem, failing to take the action needed to support innovation, industry and the high skilled economic future we need. Far from keeping us an outward looking country they are turning inwards – especially on Europe. They are zealous and ideo-

logical in attacking the state and public sector, when we know it is more important than ever in tackling inequality, uniting our communities and healing our fractured country.

So what must Labour do?

First, we should be at the forefront of new technology. Today, Britain is still driving new ideas and amazing science that leads the world, but this time, we aren't turning it into amazing trade or growth and our productivity has stalled. Take graphene, a material capable of withstanding huge amounts of heat, 200 times stronger than steel, yet flexible – all good qualities for the next Labour leader! China has patented 2,200 products based on graphene, the US 1,700, but Britain – its home – just over 100.

Despite our brilliant scientific history, and the great academic and research breakthroughs we still enjoy, we just aren't cutting it in the modern world. We should be looking for a revolution in research and science investment. That's why I will set a target of 3 per cent GDP investment in research and development from our private and public sector. With a 3 per cent GDP science target we can aim to achieve what other powerful economies do – higher proportions of their workforce in good manufacturing jobs, which in the UK would mean two million more skilled manufacturing jobs.

And it would help us face the potentially devastating challenge of climate change and energy insecurity. Perversely in the budget the government decided to increase taxes on renewable energy. Instead we must take major action on incentives for the new technology crucial to a low-carbon future.

We must create a new world-class technical education system that connects schools, university technical colleges, apprenticeship agencies and universities so it becomes easier to train in the skills we need for the future.

This is all key to solving our productivity crisis. Right now Britain isn't winning in the world. The UK's labour productivity is 14 per cent below the average for the G7 – the largest gap since 1991. So we should end the logjam on major projects that can boost our productivity – such as airport capacity – create the good, well paid jobs that can drive our economy upwards, and recognise that the infrastructure of a modern economy must value childcare as much as road-building.

Second, we must make sure everyone can get the jobs of the future. A fair and productive country is one that draws on the talents of everyone. Crucial for Labour is that increased prosperity must be shared. That we should challenge underlying inequality, make sure everyone gets an equal chance, that no one is left behind.

Education has got to be centre stage for us at the next election. From Sure Start right through to lifelong learning – we need education centred on tackling inequality and a curriculum that helps prepare people for the jobs of the future. I want to broaden our vision of a good education to include wellbeing, happiness and confidence. If you have had a good experience of school and education you are more likely to feel confident later in life that you can retrain and learn something new. This is a big social mobility issue – if life elsewhere doesn't give people confidence in themselves, then we need to make sure schooling does.

And rather than obsessing about structures, we need to focus on raising standards. There are too many changes taking place without any proper involvement by teachers. We need to put much greater emphasis on professional development, with teachers able to do sabbaticals and postgraduate degrees and to progress without having to go into a management job if that's

not what they want. That will help ensure our education system provides the skills needed to progress in the world.

We should be making economic decisions that help those on low and middle incomes. It's not just fair in helping people get on and do better for themselves, it's good for growth too. IMF research shows that if you lift the income share of the low and middle-income people, the return in growth is far greater than only rising incomes at the top.

And we must fight George Osborne's dangerous undermining of tax credits. Millions of families are going to be thousands of pounds worse off. If you're on average pay with two children, you'll lose £2,000 in tax credit cuts next year. A single mum with two children working part time on minimum wage will gain just over £400 from higher pay from the budget but lose £860 from lower tax credits in 2016/17. Increased wages are not anywhere near enough. And the Tories are discouraging parents from working harder. Earn an extra pound or two and they'll claw half of it back from your tax credits. Remember how they said a 50 per cent tax was a disincentive for the highest paid people in the country? Yet they are quite happy to do it for the poorest paid. Make no mistake: this is a direct attack on the idea – Labour's idea – that the state has a role in supporting families into work. To concede the debate on tax credits it to concede this very Fabian idea.

I want us to do more to set out a strong and principled Labour approach for the future. That is why I will set up a Welfare Reform Commission to look at how we best support families to get on in the middle of the 21st century. It needs to look at how the state best supports work, prevents poverty and delivers value for money. That means rethinking the Tories' universal credit, which started with sensible aims but has now been so badly wrecked that it won't provide the proper incentives or rewards for work that must lie at the heart of the system. We need to build in strong principles of obligation and responsibility to work for those who can alongside proper protection and support for those who can't through serious sickness or disability.

And the Tories have abandoned the child poverty target – but we shouldn't tolerate child poverty in Britain in the 21st century at all. We should recommit to ending child poverty in Britain within a generation.

Third, we must respond to what can fragment communities and whole parts of our country. Of course, a fairer society that cares about child poverty in Aberdeen and Bethnal Green is one response to those who seek to divide us – showing people there is strength in our solidarity.

In part the answer is devolving power to all parts of our country, not just cities but towns too. Rhetoric about devolution while shelving major regional transport is just not good enough. We need sustainable investment and devolution for all parts of the country and it should go further than government plans – so that energy, skills and policing are all included too.

For us to try and build that sense of things that we have in common rather than things that pull us apart, I also think we should now set in chain a constitutional convention to draw up a written constitution. Our scattered constitution has been stretched and torn – we need one written constitution that talks about the values we share and to uphold the integrity and importance of our union.

And having taken part in town hall meetings up and down the country over the last few years, I know the concern about the impact of high levels of immigration on communities. Immigration is really important for Britain, but the system must be fair. Labour's response wasn't good enough in the

past. We did a lot to put that right over the past five years, but we need to do far more to take on UKIP in particular. That means making the exploitation of migrants to undercut jobs and wages a crime, it means giving greater prominence to our manifesto policy of bringing in more EU money to support communities that have experienced high levels of migration, and it means deliverable reform in Europe to prevent a race to the bottom in welfare and rights at work.

Fourth, we need to show we can have strong, sustainable public finances and deliver high-quality public services too. The Tories have launched an ideological attack on our public services. George Osborne's latest proposals for a 40 per cent cut in many public services go far beyond what is needed to bring the deficit down – instead it's an attempt to shrink the state for ideological reasons. At the same time ministers are trying to undermine the great public institutions that bind us together – especially the NHS and the BBC. Labour cannot and must not sign up to these plans.

But nor can we ignore the challenges our public finances and public services face. It was essential to borrow to support our economy during the financial crisis, but now the deficit and the debt need to come down – through stronger growth, fair taxation (such as more action on tax avoidance and evasion) and savings. Budgets will be tight for some time to come. We need to show how we can find sensible savings that still protect the frontline – for example the kinds of savings I found in the Home Office from procurement, abolishing police and crime commissioners and ending the subsidy for gun licences. We need to be much more innovative in the way that we deliver more for less. There have been some great examples of using digital technology in public services, but it's failed to move into areas where it could improve services and increase efficiency.

Public services also need more flexibility and be shaped around not just the individual but around the family and the community and around the pinch points in their lives. For example, we used to have nothing between when the midwife goes home and when the child goes to school on their first day, but Sure Start was introduced which helped to bridge that gap. It's these moments when public services can help build resilience. Most importantly, we must value our public services. We know they are not merely a cost to manage. We should be restoring pride and value to our public services.

None of this is easy. Labour didn't earn enough support across the country and we need to reach out. We can only do that with an optimistic vision for the future. One that is true to Labour values, and that everyone can come behind to make our country stronger. People will tell you in this leadership election you have to choose between following your heart – what you care about – and following your head – what's needed in practice. I believe we have to do both. I want people to vote Labour with their heads and their hearts – and that's why I'm standing to be leader of our party.

3

JEREMY CORBYN

Labour has many challenges to win in 2020. But the first challenge we must meet is for us as a party. We need to be united in our identity and our values – proud of what we stand for, and confident and credible that we can deliver a better society.

To do that, we have to stop being a machine and start being a movement again. Our party was founded to stand up to injustice, but too often we have lost our way, ignored our supporters or been cowed by powerful commercial interests and the press.

We lose our way when we don't listen to our people, our communities and instead listen to the counsel of the Westminster commentariat. This is the politics of the bubble – news from the court of the great leader, filtered by whether the (press) barons are restless. Unsurprisingly, these papers owned by tax dodging billionaires don't always have an interest in helping us.

Our best media is our movement: the people who organise in their workplace or who are active in their communities – they are our best advocates. And if we listen to those people, we can produce a shared vision that can take the country with us.

No leader has a monopoly on wisdom. Whoever you pick as leader must organise our party like a social movement, building on our unique base: our trade union link to millions of working people, our quarter of a million members, and our growing band of registered supporters.

They are the people who will deliver our message. But because we are a movement and not a military hierarchy they are not just the footsoldiers, but the creators of our message too. Their wisdom, their insight is what will ensure we have the right policies to win.

The more we exclude our people, the weaker we are. The more we involve them, the stronger we will be. So to win, our party must draw on its greatest strength: its people.

So after this leadership and deputy leadership election is done – the first under one person, one vote – I propose we review our membership fees to become as inclusive as we can.

We need to democratise our party, involve people in new and creative ways, and campaign with them for change at a local, national and global level.

Ours is a movement to give people hope – the hope of a better world, with less injustice and more equality, peace and solidarity. Together we need to agree policies that will achieve those goals and then campaign for them, winning more people over to our principles – and giving them hope that things can be better.

The politics of the machine dominate too much. It looks at the electorate through party labels, asking how can we win back Tory voters? How can we appeal to SNP voters? How can we outflank UKIP?

Machine politics sees elections as a game to win – and recreates the world in its image. It constructs the electorate as ‘Terraced Melting Pot’ or ‘New Homemakers’ or ‘Suburban Mindsets’. These are genuine categories used for consumer targeting that have been embraced by political parties, including ours. We need to remember that people are individuals, not faceless categories.

These reductive social constructs are then targeted with tailored policies in a mechanistic consumer transaction.

This is not how politics works. We are not trying to sell people on trying a new brand of washing powder. Using transactional consumer marketing strategies to target voters professionalises politics for a profession that isn’t politics – and it excludes and demoralises our activists and supporters who hold the real insight into their neighbours.

Our local trade unions, local parties, local councillors, constituency MPs and local members know their communities. They know the people and the issues they face. We need strong networks in every location, built from the bottom up, not dictated to from the top down.

A movement mobilises people and the most overlooked group within the electorate is those who have not been mobilised. At the 2015 election, 34 per cent of people who were registered to vote didn’t vote. They are more likely to be younger, from an ethnic minority background and to be working class – as are the hundreds of thousands who are not registered to vote at all.

These are the people who would benefit most from the sort of Labour government I know we all believe in: that stands up against discrimination, that reduces inequality and poverty, that campaigns with people for a fairer society for all.

If we had convinced just one in five of those who didn’t vote then we would today have a Labour government. And I know too that we can win back the trust and support of many of those who left us in 2015 for the Conservatives, UKIP, the Greens or SNP.

Our party, our policies

Labour has drifted into a presidential model of politics in which the leader and their office comes up with all the policies. I want to change that.

In the past when Labour party conference voted for something the leadership didn’t like, senior MPs were wheeled out to tell the press that it would be ignored. That alienates our support and undermines our principles as a democratic socialist party. That top-down behaviour has to end – we make the best policy through inclusive democratic discussion.

But we cannot simply make policy at party conference once a year. We need to review our policy-making process to ensure that it is inclusive, accessible, participatory and able to take democratic decisions quickly when necessary.

In recent years British politics has disillusioned people, and our own party has played a role in that too. We have to be humble about that. We have to rebuild trust not only in our party, but also in the idea that government can empower people and transform society.

Cynicism is the enemy of progress. We need to build a broad, forward-looking movement that restores hope and has a clear vision for a better Britain and the role we can play in making a better world.

We have to bust the myths that there is less money around and austerity

is inevitable. There is no less money around, it is simply in the wrong place. *The Sunday Times Rich List* reports that the 1000 richest Britons have more than doubled their wealth in the last 10 years; while official statistics show corporate Britain is the most profitable it has been for at least a generation.

Austerity is not an economic necessity, but a political choice. That is not just my assessment but that of some of the world's leading economists, among them Nobel laureates. The idea that a crash caused by boardroom greed and cabinet neglect should be paid for by cuts to the services and benefits of all is not a Labour idea.

We must become an anti-austerity movement, but we must do more than that. Together we must build a vision for a modern, prosperous and sustainable economy that works for all, not just a few.

We have some big questions to ask and some big challenges to answer. We can overcome the challenge of climate change and build a sustainable future – but not if we leave power in the hands of corporations only interested in short-term profit. We need democratic government acting in the long-term interests of people, not husky-hugging photo opportunities.

Over the course of this leadership campaign I have been setting out some of that vision, drawing on the campaigning movements that have influenced me and that have mobilised people across the country.

It was our party that was diminished when the RMT and FBU union members disaffiliated from us and as we lost thousands of members. We must rebuild our party, winning back members and affiliates who walked away, often feeling like we had walked away from them. Our party had nearly half a million members in 1997 and that must be our target again.

It is encouraging that both the RMT and FBU have got involved in this contest and backed my leadership campaign, alongside our affiliated unions, and other socialist societies. Several thousand people – ex-party members, ex-Labour voters, trade unionists, peace campaigners, students, and people young and old who are new to our party – have rejoined or registered as supporters to back my campaign, and others. We must continue this momentum through to 2020.

The endorsement of my campaign by so many people and by so many of our affiliates is not an endorsement of me, but of an approach: one that stands up for our values in an inclusive, participatory, and democratic way.

Electing a leader in September 2015 won't win us the election in May 2020. What we need to do is build a movement that involves people in setting out a shared vision for a more prosperous future for all. The election will then be ours for the taking.

4 LIZ KENDALL

This year we lost a second general election in a row. And make no mistake, we lost it badly.

Rather than returning to government we went backwards, losing seats and allowing the Tories to achieve a majority that some in our party had complacently considered impossible.

And we lost for a simple reason: we didn't trust people. Our answer to too many of the problems we face as a country was to regulate, to restrict, to fix, or ban. Too often, we spoke as if the challenges facing Britain could be solved by Westminster politicians and Whitehall civil servants alone.

The solutions Labour needs to tackle inequality – and win next time – are rooted in restoring that bond of trust.

Losing an election hurts, not just because we've been rejected, but because we can't put our values into action, and we can't tackle the inequalities of modern Britain. Losing makes us ask difficult questions of ourselves.

And at these difficult times for our party it can sometimes feel like we're struggling to articulate what we're for. But the answer is clear: we are the people's party. And when we're at our best we are both trusted by those people and willing to place our trust in them.

Our politics must be of the people, for the people, and by the people.

Labour's vision must be for people in every corner of our country to have the power and control to shape their own lives. I want to see employees with a say and a stake in their workplace – and for everyone who has an idea about how to set up and grow a small business or community enterprise to get the backing they need.

Supporting people to do things for themselves: that is the only way we'll tackle the inequalities that are growing in Conservative-ruled Britain. The deeply regressive Tory budget demonstrated, as if there were any doubt, that the Labour party's enduring mission to fight for greater equality will be more relevant than ever in the coming years.

But supporting people to do things for themselves means we cannot stand by whilst the Tories cut away at the backing the state provides. Long-term, our aim must be for an economy where work pays well enough to live on. That's why I'd make building a living wage society a priority, and give the Low Pay Commission greater powers to drive up low pay. And I'd review the £100bn cost of tax reliefs to find the money to restore working tax credits and give public sector workers the pay rise they need and deserve.

And Labour has always stood for progressive taxation and the need to move resources from the wealthy to the poor. That's why I oppose George Osborne's cut to inheritance tax.

Yet that can't be the sum of our ambitions. In our brightest days we saw that equality was about more than transfer payments. Being equal is about how we're treated by the people and institutions around us. It's about living

in circumstances which give us self-respect, dignity and a sense of control over our own lives.

We have to accept that despite the huge advances that we're rightly proud of, great inequalities still remained after Labour's time in government. Indeed they have been on the rise for decades. The process of deindustrialisation ended the secure path many had through life. It undermined the sense of place our people and country had in the world. It destroyed the solidarity which used to be at the centre of community life, and pushed our kind of politics into crisis with it.

So a post-industrial Labour party had to do things differently. Our response, between 1997 and 2010, was to use the proceeds of Britain's financial boom to spend money on public services and physical infrastructure, and to legislate against many social injustices. I'm proud of the schools we built, our new hospitals and colleges, our Sure Start centres and leisure centres. I'm proud too that we introduced the national minimum wage and tax credits to make sure work pays. But buildings, laws and tax credits don't create the conditions for a good life on their own.

This comes when people have a sense of power and control over their own lives. From the relationships we have with our family, friends, work colleagues and neighbours, and the bonds we build with others. The early Labour movement understood this.

A new settlement

We need a new political settlement where power is devolved to the nations, cities, towns, and counties of Britain. Our political union remains fragile: each of our nations must have a greater say shaping its own destiny. Devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is accelerating. I believe we must support England's right to its own voice, too. Devolution goes hand in hand with our sense of identity, belonging and pride.

The Tories claim they want to devolve power throughout Britain. Yet they fail to match new responsibilities for councils with the resources and fair funding councils require. And the Treasury still controls everything – including insisting combined authorities have elected mayors, whether local people want them or not. But Labour has been too timid on devolution in the past, and too slow to seize this agenda for our own.

As leader I will champion a new, comprehensive, nationwide model of devolution within the nations of the United Kingdom, including England. That means working with our cities, towns and counties to help them take on more power and responsibility over welfare, housing, health, education, transport and economic growth. Under my leadership, local authorities will be equal partners with ministers agreeing a new settlement for devolved powers and responsibilities every Treasury budget cycle.

To tackle the real inequalities of wealth, opportunity and power that we face, Britain must undergo a radical and vast devolution of where power and decision making lies.

Debate and decide

Handing money and power to local councils isn't enough, though. We also need to move power out from Whitehall and beyond the town hall, to people

in workplaces and schools and communities. We must ensure the voices of service users and citizens drive our public institutions to improve, and hold businesses to account.

The change we need is to make decisions in a way that gives each of us a real stake and a real say. Power in people's hands. That is what Labour stands for. Yesterday, today and always.

I've championed greater public involvement in decision-making ever since I wrote the first book on citizens' juries in 1994. The argument I made back then remains true today: we will get better decisions if we involve people who see the impact of policies for themselves. And we'll get better value for money too – because citizens are more careful than civil servants about where their taxes are spent.

There's now a wealth of experience from around the world about involving citizens in decision-making. For example, Melbourne's people's panel reshaped the city's \$4bn budget plan, and persuaded the council to increase charges on land developers and spend more money on green measures. We must ensure power lies with people in their workplaces, public services, schools and streets, not just the town hall.

'Government of the people, for the people, by the people'. Our politics needs to be ruled by that old principle. Abraham Lincoln made those words famous at the Gettysburg address, but they have a far longer history on this side of the Atlantic. They were first printed in John Wycliffe's first translation of the Bible into English. And they summarise a commitment to trust the judgement of the people come what may. It is a commitment that's been central to radical politics for more than 600 years. It is a commitment Labour must now renew.

So whilst the Tories leave those who are weak on their own, help those who are already strong, and hoard power within a narrow elite, Labour will put power into people's hands so they can help themselves, and one another too.

That requires a new political settlement, which devolves power to the nations, cities, towns and counties of Britain. It means radical reform of our institutions so people have a say and a stake in how they are run. It means supporting people, as individuals and in their families and in their communities, to have control over the resources and services that shape their lives. And it means ensuring our party is an active part of every community and respects the people's judgement always, not just in the wake of a shattering defeat.

Too many politicians think power is something for themselves, rather than something to be shared with individuals and communities. As leader, I want Labour to win power in order to give it away.

LEADING LABOUR

The Fabian essays

At crucial moments throughout Labour's history, the Fabian Society has been the place where the party reflects on its past and debates its future. Now, as Labour seeks to come to terms with its shocking rejection at the polls and elect a new leader, we have asked each of the contenders for the leadership to set out their political visions and offers to the party.

The next leader of the Labour party will face a very different political landscape to their predecessors. So many of the old political certainties are no more, and Labour will have to reach out in many different directions to secure a majority government. The long shadow cast by the financial crisis limits the potential for public spending, and faith in the ability of political institutions to tackle complex social problems has collapsed.

This new landscape of course brings with it great challenges, but also huge opportunities to practise politics in new and exciting ways. In these essays, all four candidates were tasked with answering the same main question: how can the Labour party thrive in new times and secure its fundamental mission of creating a more equal society?

With Andy Burnham, Yvette Cooper, Jeremy Corbyn and Liz Kendall.